

THE
INVESTIGATORS
in

THE TRAIL OF THE
RAVEN





in

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OF THE
RAVEN**

Pete can't believe his eyes. In bright sunshine, a black shadow hovers around on the roof of a hotel. Instinctively, Pete pulls up his camera and presses the button several times. What he holds in his hands later is a sensation: the first photograph taken of the Raven, the brazen jewel thief from Los Angeles. But with the publication of the photos, the uncanny burglar becomes aware of the three detectives from Rocky Beach. He challenges them to a competition—and a race against time begins.

The Three Investigators
in
The Trail of the Raven

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Translated, adapted, and edited from:

Die drei ???: Die Spur des Raben

(The Three ???: The Raven's Trail)

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(1997)

Cover art by

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(2019-12-18)

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1. Some Like it Hot

“Done!” Bob moaned and threw his backpack in the corner of the trailer. “I thought I’d never pass that maths test! I had some real trouble with the last assignment!”

“Not me,” Jupiter replied boastfully, bobbing on the desk chair. “It was easy.”

“Sure. It’s for you. You also have an infallible master brain, which never malfunctions, even for algebra. Sometimes I really envy you for it.”

“Only sometimes?” Jupe asked and grinned maliciously.

“Yes, only sometimes.” Bob grinned back. “Because from time to time your mental work completely blocks out your physical abilities.”

“So,” replied Jupiter, unmoved. “Like when?”

Instead of answering, Bob grabbed one of several tennis balls that was lying on the desk and threw it at Jupiter. The First Investigator flinched and tried to catch it, but he was too slow. The yellow ball shot right past his head.

“Now, for example,” Bob triumphed. “Pete would have caught that. Your reaction speed leaves a lot to be desired. But don’t worry about it, it’s normal for head people.”

Jupiter glared angrily at his friend. Then he turned surprisingly fast on his desk chair, picked up the ball and threw it back. Bob caught it.

“Ha! You can’t fool me like that, Jupiter Jones!” he shouted over-heartedly, grabbing the other balls on the table and setting himself up to attack his friend.

Jupiter responded to the game, jumped up from the chair and hid behind the back of the chair. Bob began the bombardment and covered him with targeted throws.

Within a very short time, not only tennis balls flew through the air, but also other unbreakable objects found in the headquarters of their detective agency.

Jupiter tried to protect himself with the seat cushion of the chair. One of the tennis balls caught him in the forehead, so he gave up his cushion shield and aimed one ball at Bob’s face. He hit it spot on.

Bob stumbled backward and suddenly screamed.

“Bob!” shouted Jupiter, scared. “What happened?”

Bob held his hands in front of his eyes and moaned. “Darn!” he groaned. “My contact lenses! I lost one!”

The First Investigator couldn’t stop himself from laughing. Since Bob had become too vain for glasses, his contact lenses were his biggest problem. He had lost them several times, and The Three Investigators had crawled on all fours more than once through Headquarters to find the transparent plastic bits.

“There’s nothing to laugh at,” Bob complained and angrily threw the last tennis ball at Jupiter. At that moment the phone rang. Jupiter ducked, the felt ball flew over him, bounced off the wall and swept the phone off the desk. With a loud rattling it landed on the ground.

“Well aimed,” Jupiter remarked and laughed again.

Then he bent down after the phone and picked up the receiver.

“Hello?” he asked, half expecting the machine to be broken.

“Hello,” it came out of the receiver, and Jupiter breathed a sigh of relief.

"Jupiter Jones here," he said and had to laugh again as he looked over at Bob, who was cautiously groping the floor.

"What's going on over there, Jupiter? Are you taking your trailer apart or did I just miss an earthquake?"

"Something like that, Mr Andrews," replied Jupiter, who recognized Bob's father by his voice. "It's somewhere between trailer dismantling and an earthquake."

"Well, I just hope you're not throwing your furniture at each other's heads," Mr Andrews said dryly, and Jupiter smiled. "Could I have a word with my son, please?"

Jupiter looked over at Bob again, but he was still busy crawling around on the floor. "Bob's just... preventing something."

"Is he in the bathroom?"

Jupiter laughed. "No, he's looking for one of his contact lenses."

"Did he lose another one again? You can tell him right now, Jupiter, that we're not paying for him any new ones this time. He really wanted to trade his glasses for these things, so he should watch how he finances them especially when he constantly loses them."

"Found!" Bob shouted and triumphantly held the precious gem in his hand. "Wait a minute!" he went over to the phone and took Jupiter's handset. "Dad? No, it's all right, I found it and it's all right."

Bob talked to his father while Jupiter started cleaning up the central office. The trailer served his two friends and him as the office of their detective firm. It stood on the premises of the salvage yard operated by Jupiter's uncle Titus and aunt Mathilda. Over the years, the boys had turned the initially rather sparsely-equipped central office into a real office. In addition to a telephone, a fax machine, a copier and of course the indispensable computer, they had also set up a small crime laboratory and a darkroom at the rear part of the trailer. Many exciting cases had begun here at Headquarters.

"That's really great, Dad," Bob said. "Yeah, I'll ask them right now... I'm sure they're thrilled... And we get a hotel room, too? Fantastic! ... Okay, everything else tonight. See ya." He hung up.

"Well, what did your father want?"

"Imagine he has an assignment for us!" Bob shouted enthusiastically.

"A new case?" Jupe asked with interest.

"Not exactly. More like a journalist assignment. The Golden Raven film festival will take place in Los Angeles in the next few days. The city is once again buzzing in activities, and you won't get a foot on the ground because of all the tourists and movie stars. And the *Los Angeles Times*, for which my father works, wants to publish a special supplement about this hype, with many photos and little stories that take place on the fringes of such a festival." Bob paused dramatically.

"And?" Jupe asked curiously. He hated to be tensed, although he often couldn't resist doing it to others.

"And we're supposed to take photos. Actually, my father wanted to take this job, but he has too much to do in the office. So he wants us to do the work. We'll get cameras set up, walk around Los Angeles for a few days and take snapshots. We also stay at a hotel—and the *Los Angeles Times* pays for everything. Well, isn't that something?"

"Sounds good. But what's the catch?"

"Don't be so suspicious," Bob cried out, disappointed that Jupiter wasn't as enthusiastic as he had hoped. "There's no catch."

"There is one," said the First Investigator. "We have to walk for days through a city completely crowded with tourists jumping and screaming on the street just because Jodie

Foster's limousine is passing by."

"So what? It's fun, isn't it? And if we photograph this scene, maybe we get an extra bonus from Jodie Foster's agent who will use the photo for advertising purposes."

At that moment a bicycle bell rang outside.

"That's definitely Pete," Jupiter guessed, and indeed a few moments later the Second Investigator, a tall, athletic boy, entered Headquarters.

"Hello, you two. Holidays at last, huh? How was your maths test, Bob?"

Bob waved off. "Don't ask. There's news." He quickly told Pete about the assignment that his father had given them. "What do you say to that? Our first one's not exactly thrilled."

"Hey, I never said that," Jupiter defended himself. "I'm just not sure it's such a great idea to spend the short autumn vacation in crowded Los Angeles."

"I think it's great. Maybe you can get your father to get us press passes so that we can get up close and personal with the stars. There's only one problem with this: I don't really have time," said Pete, looking down at the floor.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Bob wanted to know. "Kelly hogging you over the holidays again?"

"Nonsense," Pete defended himself. "You're thinking as if Kelly can control me."

Bob and Jupiter grinned at each other. "Do you really want me to answer that?" Bob asked the First Investigator.

Pete fought back. "Stop this nonsense. You are no different. What about Elizabeth and Lys?"

"Elizabeth went with her parents to visit some relatives over the holidays, so she's not in Rocky Beach anyway," Bob said.

"And Lys has a couple of major college exams after the holidays, which she has to study for. In order not to be distracted, she's staying at her friend Amanda Black's hotel for a week," Jupiter added. "You know, her former drama teacher."

"I still remember it vividly," Bob said and thought of a past case about an alleged haunting in this hotel, which they had successfully completed.

"I still don't have time," Pete took up the thread again, "because I want to train for the school triathlon championships. It's a week after the holidays, and until then I've put together a sophisticated training program. So I can't leave."

"Come on, Pete. Your sporting ambition is in all its glory, but can't you at least let it rest during the holidays?" Bob asked.

"I can't do that during the holidays. Finally I have enough time to train," Pete said.

"You can do that in Los Angeles too, can't you?" Jupiter said.

"How come we have to shoot celebrities and their fans all day?" Pete asked.

"There's always time for sports. For example, you could jog after Jodie Foster's limousine," Bob suggested.

"Excuse me?" Pete was irritated.

"Forget it. So, are you coming with us?" Bob asked.

Pete thought long and hard. "You're right," he finally said. "I can actually train in Los Angeles—running on the beach, swimming in the sea. But I have to take my bike with me."

"That will be a problem, though," Jupiter objected. "We can't transport your bike with your MG, nor with Bob's Beetle. What if you borrow a bike in Los Angeles?"

"Borrow?" Pete laughed. "You got to be kidding me. I don't want a run-down granny bike, I want a sensible training bike."

Pete was very proud of his new racing machine, which he had only recently bought and because of which he even left his beloved MG every now and then. "You can't borrow these

things.”

“So you want to take your bike with you? And how are you going to do that?”

“Very simple,” Pete replied and grinned. “We’ll leave the cars behind and cycle to Los Angeles.”

“You can’t be serious,” Jupiter protested. “... to Los Angeles?”

“It’s fifteen miles or so to the city,” Pete interrupted.

“At least twenty!” Jupiter disagreed. “Besides, you know the traffic in Los Angeles. Riding a bike is life-threatening.”

“Right. I know the traffic. And that’s why I’m pleading for the bike. We’ve been in LA enough times in a traffic jam and we were annoyed to be on the road without a bike.”

“But during this time? It’s hot! And it can be fatal to ride a bicycle in Los Angeles,” Jupiter tried again to dissuade him from the plan.

“It’s not that far. And driving a car can be just as deadly if you’re not careful. As far as the heat is concerned, a small sweating cure is quite healthy. Besides, we’d have a lot more flexibility in town. And we will be doing something for the environment and for our body. So you should be up for it right away,” Pete sneered, poking his index finger into Jupiter’s slightly too-bulging stomach.

Jupiter straightens up indignantly. “What’s that supposed to mean? I’m slimmer than I’ve ever been!”

“That’s right,” Bob said, because Jupiter had actually lost weight. He wasn’t fat anymore, he was just chubby.

“But that doesn’t mean you’re particularly athletic. Like I said, as a head person, you are now and then completely blocked when it comes to physical activities. I think Pete’s idea is not so bad.”

Jupiter sighed resignedly. “I’m gonna have a hard time over this.”

2. Above the Rooftops of Los Angeles

“I’ll never do that again,” Jupiter puffed angrily. Exhausted, the sweat had already darkened his T-shirt as he wiped his wet forehead with the back of his hand. “I’ll never get involved in anything like this again! This is murder!”

They cycled over a small hilly road through the Santa Monica Mountains. Bob, too, had difficulty in wheezing at the scorching heat, but he said nothing.

It was indeed unusually hot for this time of year, and he had often wondered during the journey whether these were the effects of the climate changes caused by the hole in the ozone layer.

“We could have gone along the coast,” Pete remarked. “It wouldn’t have been so steep there, and we might have had some fresh breeze blowing around our nose. But I remember that a certain Jupiter Jones insisted on going through the mountains because there was not so much traffic and we can travel one or two miles less. Well, that’s what you get from it: mountains and not the slightest breeze.”

Jupiter remained silent, which was rare, and Pete considered whether he could not think of anything more or whether he simply wanted to save his breath. He did not mind the ride through the hilly countryside himself, despite all the baggage he had to carry on his back and those stowed in the carrier bags.

They reached a hilltop, and Jupiter stopped. “Break!” he decided, turned off his bike and took a bottle of water out of his backpack. Relieved, he drank in greedy gulps.

“Another break? This is already the fourth one. That’s not how I imagined my training,” Pete moaned.

“Your problem,” Jupiter found. “You can go ahead and put our stuff in the hotel closets.”

“Now stop arguing,” Bob intervened. “We’ll soon make it, because over there’s the city.” He pointed to the east where the first houses appeared behind a large forested area. On the horizon were the high-rise buildings of Los Angeles and the haze that hovered over the city. “Looks like it’s all downhill now. I hope that calms both of you down a little!”

After a while they got back up and let the bikes roll down the mountain road. Bob was right. From here the way was much easier. Just a quarter of an hour later, they passed the university and crossed the districts of Bel Air and Beverly Hills, where they marvelled at the villas that were lined with vast parks in this quiet area. Again and again they discovered certain street corners or houses that they saw in the cinema or on television. Beverly Hills was especially a very popular backdrop for movies. Only rarely did an expensive road cruiser pass by. Most people were also cycling or walking here. Many joggers in brightly coloured clothes were running on the wide sidewalks.

“You see, there are other athletic people as well,” Pete remarked.

Leaving Beverly Hills behind, they reached Wilshire Boulevard, the boulevard of Los Angeles that stretched across the city. Now it got tight. The Three Investigators laboriously got themselves into the dense traffic. Around them there was loud confusion of engine noise, horns and squeaking tyres. The cars were close to each other and took no consideration for cyclists when turning off, so the three had to be very careful.

There were advertising posters everywhere for the upcoming film festival. The Golden Raven, the coveted trophy of the festival awarded to the stars, looked down on the street from hundreds of billboards, and underneath the figure was the golden lettering: "On whose shoulder is the raven sitting this time?"

Jupiter looked up with interest, but suddenly a cyclist raced past him at an incredible speed, and the First Investigator was so startled that he almost fell. "It was madness to ride the bikes to Los Angeles," he exclaimed angrily. "I said it right away!"

"Don't get upset," called Pete, who had taken the lead, over his back. "That was one of those bike couriers. They have to be fast enough to live up to their reputation as the fastest couriers in the city."

"I don't care who it was," Jupiter yelled over the noise of the cars. "I'm just saying none of our cases have ever been as dangerous as this!"

They continued to follow Wilshire Boulevard until they reached the city centre. Finally they were able to turn right into a somewhat quieter street where the hotel was located. Bob's father had reserved them a room there for the next five days. They parked the bikes in a safe place and locked them together. Then they took their luggage and entered the Holiday Inn Downtown, a six-story building that was no different from all the other new buildings made of concrete and glass.

"Shower!" Jupiter moaned as they finally entered their room on the top floor. "Me first!"

Bob wanted to protest, because he had been looking forward to a shower too, but Jupiter took off his T-shirt and disappeared into the bathroom. Bob stepped up to the window and looked out.

The hotel was a little higher than the surrounding buildings, so it offered a fantastic view over a large part of the city. "Room with a view," he muttered.

In the evening they made their way to the city centre to take the first photos. After they had all taken a shower, had something to eat and rested, Jupiter had suggested that they go back to Wilshire Boulevard, where there was most to see, and if they were lucky enough to see an advertising campaign for the upcoming film festival. The heat and car traffic had subsided and they enjoyed strolling along the wide sidewalk, looking at the brightly-lit shops and the many people who were on the road at that time.

Pete obviously liked his new role as a press photographer very much, because he kept snapping everything that came in front of his lens. "Hey, Jupiter!" he shouted and pressed the trigger when the First Investigator turned to face him.

Jupiter grinned, tormented. "Will Mr Andrews be thrilled if you shoot his photos so senselessly?" he asked.

"I'm just practising," Pete defended himself. "Besides, there's not much to see of the film festival yet. What are we supposed to be photographing here? The billboards, maybe?"

"There's probably more going on in Hollywood. We can go there tomorrow," Bob suggested.

The First Investigator avoided asking what means of transport Bob had in mind. "How about we go to one of these posh hotels? Maybe we'll find something interesting. Right at the end of this street is the Biltmore—that giant block."

"How do you know that?" Pete asked.

"Well, listen," Jupe said. "The Biltmore is the biggest hotel in Western USA, you know that. By the way, in 1923..."

Pete waved him off. "Thank you, mastermind, that's enough for me, I don't want to know any more."

Jupiter looked at him blankly. "But this hotel really has a very interesting history. For example, did you know that the Oscars were held there a few times?"

"It's not about the Oscars, it's about the Golden Raven, if you remember," Pete replied, unnerved.

"Besides, this was..." Jupiter began again, but Bob interrupted him.

"There it is," Bob shouted, pointing to a brightly-lit building front that appeared as they turned the corner. Large columns supported a canopy, and the entire front was decorated with countless lights. The hotel stood opposite a church and was even bigger than the tower.

"That's really huge."

"It has more than seven hundred rooms," Jupiter told them.

Above the awning of the entrance was hung one of the large posters advertising the Golden Raven. It was brightly lit. They went closer.

"Looks like some of the stars actually stays here," Pete said. "The Golden Raven is the perfect event for movie fans. Why don't we live here as well?"

"Because the *Los Angeles Times* doesn't have that much money," Bob conjectured and thought of their own, rather modest hotel.

"It's definitely a good picture," Pete said, lifting the camera several times to photograph the advertising poster at a particularly slanted angle.

Suddenly, he saw something strange. "What's that?" he asked in surprise, pointing up.

Jupiter and Bob looked up and saw a dark figure hovering above their heads in the air. It moved very slowly and jerkily towards the roof of the hotel.

"What's that?" Pete repeated and took out the camera again.

He zoomed the lens in on the figure. "That's a man!" he shouted. "Or something like that. It looks... weird." He pressed the trigger a couple times. "Whatever it is, it'll definitely be a good picture."

"Man..." began Jupiter. "That... that's a burglar!"

The others looked at him in amazement. "Yeah, that's a burglar! He's on the hotel roof trying to get in somewhere! Look, now he's reaching the wall!"

"But how can he float like that?" Bob asked.

"Never mind! Come on, let's go into the hotel!" Jupiter ran towards the entrance and his two friends followed him. The doorman tried to prevent them from entering, but The Three Investigators simply pushed past him and ran into the foyer where the red carpet and golden light of the chandeliers greeted them.

Jupiter played for a moment with the thought of running to the reception and reporting what they saw. But Pete took a decision by running directly to the elevator. A few people just got out and the door was about to close, but the Second Investigator managed to slip into the cabin in time. He pressed the button for the top floor and only when the elevator started moving did he realize that Jupiter and Bob were not with him. Pete wasn't sure if the speed of the elevator was the only reason for a strange feeling in his stomach. He reached the eleventh floor without anyone getting on.

"End of the line," he murmured as the doors opened almost silently. Quickly, he looked around the corridor in front of him.

Right next to the elevator was a door with the illuminated green 'Emergency Exit' sign. He pushed it open and found himself in the stairwell that led one floor up. As fast as he could, he hurried up the bare steps that ended in front of a steel door.

"Please!" he pushed down the handle, but the door was locked. He took out a small, black case that he always carried with him. It was his collection of lock picks, which had often been of great use to the three detectives. With an experienced look, he looked at the

lock and pulled a suitable lock pick out of the case and got to work on it. It didn't take long for the lock to give way to a familiar click.

The door opened. "I probably set off an alarm, but it doesn't matter now," he murmured and stepped out into the open.

A cool wind brushed his face. He was on the roof of the hotel. Although it made a noble impression from below, there was nothing to be seen up there. In the darkness of the early evening, the ventilation ducts of the air conditioning system appeared as black silhouettes against the night sky. On the ground lay coarse gravel, otherwise there was nothing. Pete tried to orientate himself to find the side of the flat roof he had seen from below, when suddenly he noticed a movement from the corner of his eye. A dark figure squatted about eight metres away at the edge of the roof. Pete wanted to sneak up quietly, but the gravel crunching under his shoes thwarted that. The figure lifted his head and turned it in his direction. Pete backed away, startled. From a black face, a giant nose protruded, and that looked like a long, pointed beak. Small flashing eyes stared at him.

"What..." Pete began.

At that moment, the figure made a shrill croaking sound, jumped up and ran towards him.

Pete was so scared that he wanted to back off. Then he remembered and courageously took a step toward the figure.

"Hold it right there!" he shouted.

The dark shadow continued unperturbed. Suddenly he tore his arms forward and pushed Pete aside. Normally the Second Investigator would have easily avoided such an attack, but the shock paralysed him, because he had not only seen arms—but wings. He slipped on the gravel and fell to the ground. The black figure ran past him, gave another loud croak and disappeared behind a ventilation shaft.

Pete scrambled to his feet and followed the shadow, but when he reached the three-metre-high metal column, no one was there. Confused, he looked around, but on the roof there were only metal shafts sticking out of the ground. There was nothing else and no place to hide.

The Second Investigator then heard another croak directly above him. He looked up and there on top of the ventilation shaft stood the black shadow shrieking frightening noises. He spread out his arms and now Pete realized that they were actually wings. The figure looked like a human bird with big black wings. The long beak shimmered in the moonlight.

Pete discovered small rungs on the wall of the shaft, but just as he was about to climb after the figure, it jumped down. It caught itself in the air and flew with outstretched wings towards and over the edge of the roof.

Shocked, Pete ran to the small parapet, where he was further surprised: instead of falling into the depths, the figure flew in a straight line towards the tower of the church opposite the hotel. Pete stared at it. The creature actually flew and now, in the darkness and from a distance, it looked more than ever like a big black bird. The figure landed safely at the edge of the church roof and then disappeared in the dark. It took the Second Investigator a while to even understand what he had seen. Then he suddenly discovered something shiny at his feet. He bent over and picked it up. It was a big black feather. At that moment a hand fell on his shoulder.

3. A Bird on a Tightrope

Jupiter and Bob had seen Pete disappear into the elevator, and the doorman had already caught up with them.

The First Investigator tried to explain to the man what had happened, but Bob thought that took too long, so he ran outside again. He stared up at the roof and suddenly he saw a big shadow floating through the air like a huge black bird. The shadow flew quite fast from the roof of the hotel to the tower of the church. Frightened and indecisive, Bob looked at the shadow, and then he ran across the street to take up the chase. If that really was a burglar—albeit a flying one—then he could not let him escape. He reached the church and looked up, but the shadow had disappeared. Then he circled the building, but from no point could he see the figure. Finally Bob went to the main entrance of the church. He expected it to be closed like most churches in Los Angeles for fear of looting and vandalism. But to his astonishment, the door opened with a soft squeak, and he entered.

Under normal circumstances he would have found the coolness that prevailed here pleasant, but instead, he shivered. Some prayer lights had been lit and placed to the side of the nave. Subdued brightness fell from the street through the Gothic-stained glass windows, so only sparse light prevailed. The church was empty and eerie in the flickering glow of the candle flames. Bob searched for an entrance to the tower and finally found a wooden door half opened on the right side. He pushed it open and saw a very narrow stone spiral staircase leading up. It was pitch black. Bob groped for a light switch, found it, but it stayed dark. The power supply had apparently been turned off for the night. He was annoyed that he had no light with him, so he went back and got one of the candles. Then he entered the stairs and slowly climbed up.

Turn after turn going up the stairs, Bob could only see a few steps at a time and always expected to encounter the unknown behind the next bend. Repeatedly he stopped to listen, but he heard nothing but his own wheeze, for the steps were very high and the stairs seemed to be endless. He had long since lost the feeling for height and did not know whether the end of the stairs was directly in front of him or was he still far away from it. Finally he reached the upper level and the open door that led to the bell tower.

Carefully, he looked in. Nothing moved, and he entered the room. The light of the candle blinded him, but when he placed it on a wooden railing, a gust of wind blew through one of the four opened windows in the room. The small flame went out.

It was almost dark now. Bob looked around. A railing served as a barrier to the shaft, in which hung the huge, heavy bell. Bob kept as far away from it as possible. In one corner stood a broom, a scrubbing brush, next to it hung an old black coat. In another corner was a switch box, apparently for operating the bell. There was no trace of the eerie bird figure.

Bob looked out one of the windows. A wide ledge led around the tower. Here the figure could have landed, perhaps it was still outside on the roof...

Then, Bob noticed a movement. The old coat in the corner suddenly plunged out and ran towards the door. Bob wanted to stand in the way of the figure, but it gave out a blood-curdling croak that paralysed Bob for a second. The figure took advantage of that moment, let out a croak again, and simply scurried past Bob towards the door, which was thrown opened

a moment later. Before Bob could even react, he heard a metal scraping of a lock being turned. Then there were footsteps going down the stone stairway, which quickly became quieter.

Bob ran to the door and shook it in vain. He took a run-up, threw himself at it. The lock was torn out from the weak wood frame and the door flew against the stone wall. Bob ran down the stairs, but without light, he stumbled more than he ran.

He was dizzy when he finally reached the bottom of the stairs and staggered into the dim light of the nave. The figure was waiting for him. It cried out a shrill croak and pushed Bob with all its might that he slipped and slid over the smooth stone floor. He heard a terrible crash and something fell out of his pocket. Quickly he wanted to stand up, but something hit his head. A dull pain pierced his head, causing colourful stars to explode before his eyes. For seconds he fought against powerlessness and waited with clenched teeth until the stars faded away.

When he saw clearly again, he heard the outer door slam shut and knew that the bird figure could be three blocks away before he even left the church. Groaning, he straightened up and wanted to curse the figure who had knocked him down when he realized that he himself had stumbled. He had slipped directly under a wooden figure of a saint and, while standing up, had his head knocked against its pedestal. This time he looked ahead and gave the wooden figure a scowl. He had lost something from his pocket and a probing grip told him that it was his wallet.

He searched the church floor, but he couldn't find it. Instead, he discovered his camera—or rather what was left of it. The crash he heard when he fell was his father's camera, which is now missing the lens.

Bob sighed and rubbed his aching bum. "All my work gone, Bob," he murmured to himself. "Really, all my work."

"Maybe I was scared when you sneaked up on me from behind, Jupiter," said Pete. "I was beginning to think it was a second black shadow of a bird laying its hand on my shoulder."

"I didn't sneak up on you," Jupiter disagreed. "You were just so excited, you just didn't hear me. Where is Bob anyway?" he abruptly changed the subject.

They stood outside the hotel looking for their friend. They had a hotel employee with them who had been notified by the doorman and wanted to make sure that the two did not run away. At that moment two police cars drove up and stopped in front of the hotel. And that's when Bob suddenly came over from the other side of the street.

It took a while for the policemen to find out what had happened. Finally, the hotel clerk asked the police officers:

"Please, come in so we can discuss this in private." They all entered the hotel, went up to the first floor and sat down in an office.

"I'm Detective Gregston," the moustached cop introduced himself. "So you guys saw the burglar and followed him?"

Jupiter nodded and began to tell his side of the events. Pete and Bob then completed the report. The three were not sure whether Detective Gregston would believe them that the figure had really flown, but obviously he was not at all surprised by their story.

"I found something up on the roof. Maybe this will help you," Pete said and reached into his shirt pocket, but Detective Gregston interrupted him.

"Don't say it. It's a raven's feather, right?" Pete was surprised. Then he pulled out the feather. "A feather, right," he said. "I don't know if it came from a raven, though."

"I'm sure of it," said the detective. "This is not the first raven's feather to appear." He took it from Pete and looked at it. It was very long and shone in a deep black. "The Raven has struck again," Gregston murmured absently.

"Again?" asked Jupiter. "So there were more burglaries? What was it that was stolen?"

Detective Gregston looked up in surprise. "You don't know that?" he asked. "Don't you read the papers?" The Three Investigators had to admit that they hadn't really noticed much around them in the last few days.

"For a few days now, a mysterious bird man has been making the city unsafe," Gregston explained. "He calls himself the Raven and seems to think he's some kind of a batman. At night he flies from roof to roof and breaks into hotels to steal from rich movie stars who are in Los Angeles for the Golden Raven."

"Excuse me, sir," Bob interrupted him, "but did he actually fly?"

Gregston laughed harshly. "At least it looks that way, doesn't it? In reality, he glides along a wire rope that he stretches from roof to roof. Always from a lower building to the roof of a hotel, so he can disappear in no time. Apparently he knows exactly where his targeted movie diva stays and which of them prefer to keep their valuable jewellery in their room instead of in the hotel safe. Today, he has succeeded in thefts that should earn him several thousands of dollars."

"And you don't have any clues?" Jupe asked.

"No. Except for the feathers the Raven always leaves behind. They are raven feathers that could be part of his costume. But these are the only tracks. No fingerprints, no indication of his hiding place, nothing. You're the first who's ever been able to chase after him."

"Not without losses," Bob said, carefully touching his bump. Then he looked at his broken camera, which he was still holding in his hand. "This is gonna land me in a lot of trouble."

"Camera!" shouted Pete. "I photographed the Raven when we were still down the road."

Gregston looked up. "Really? You photographed him? That could be a big help to the police. I'm sorry, but I have to ask you for the film. I'll have it developed in the lab right away."

"Whatever," Pete said and rewound the film, and then handed it to the detective.

"Wait a minute," Bob intervened. "We'd need a print of the photo. Actually, we're kind of press photographers right now, and if I can give my father a snapshot of the Raven, he might forgive me for the accident with his camera."

"No problem," Gregston said. "You can get a copy of the prints. Have you noticed anything else? You are the only ones who have seen the Raven so close." He looked at Bob. "You were the closest to him. What did you see?"

But Bob shrugged. "Well," he began. "It was dark in the church and the Raven was dressed in black. I didn't see him directly. I even mistook him for a black coat up in the bell tower. He was very quick and agile as can be seen from those acrobatic tricks he performs on the rope."

"He's also greedy, because he stole not only the jewellery from the hotel, but also my wallet. I lost it at the church, and when I tried to find it, it wasn't there anymore. The Raven should have dressed up as a magpie, as thieving as he is."

"The magpie is a raven bird," Jupiter enlightened him. "Ravens are a whole family of birds, including crows, jackdaws and jays. Commonly known as the raven, this bird is the common raven, and it is a part of the raven family."

"I don't think that's important in this case, Jupe," Pete interrupted him, fearing that Jupiter's lecture would take even longer if it wasn't stopped.

“Well, you can’t help me, but you’ve done a lot already. I’m going to take care of the people again. Come to the Delong Street Police Station tomorrow and pick up your prints.”

Detective Gregston said goodbye to them and they left the office together. In the hallway they were almost overrun by a pretty young woman in a bathrobe.

Energetically she walked straight towards the detective and excitedly talked to him as she waved her hands in front of his face. Time and again she spoke of her jewellery and of the incompetence of the police.

“That’s Nora Sethons,” Pete whispered excitedly, staring at the famous actress he had recently seen in a movie. “So she’s the Raven’s victim today!”

“Let’s go,” suggested Jupiter, who was uncomfortable with the scene in the hotel lobby. “Come on, Pete, it’s embarrassing the way you’re staring at her!”

Nora Sethons was still talking to Detective Gregston and didn’t notice anything around her.

“Just a moment,” Pete whispered and reached into his pocket. He pulled out a new roll of film, put it in the camera and got it ready. Then he turned off the flash and quickly took a few photos before following his friends outside.

“Hopefully it wasn’t too dark,” he said, when they were back on the street. “Those are great photos! Nora Sethons in her bathrobe yelling at a cop. The *Los Angeles Times* is gonna be all over it! Luckily, she didn’t notice I was photographing her.”

“She wouldn’t have been very thrilled,” Bob said. Slowly they strolled back to their hotel. It was still crowded on the streets and probably it would go on like this the whole night. But that was just L.A.

“What an evening,” Jupiter murmured as they strolled along the colourful and crowded Wilshire Boulevard.

“We just got here and we’re right back in the middle of it.”

“In what?” Pete wanted to know. “In a new case? Do you really think so?”

Jupiter grinned, “Do you not?”

4. For a Handful of Dollars

The next morning right after breakfast, The Three Investigators made their way to the police station on their bikes. However, they avoided riding on the main roads as they were already congested with cars. This is typical in a city like Los Angeles. Armed with a city map, Pete took the lead and a quarter of an hour later they reached Delong Street. They asked their way to Detective Gregston's office.

"Ah, there you are. The lab has already made the prints." He handed them an envelope with the photos, which Jupiter immediately took them out curiously. There were also the other photos that Pete took, and first was one with the First Investigator's puzzled face. He quickly skimmed through the next few shots until he finally found the photo of the shadow seemingly floating in the air. "You can't see much," he said, disappointed.

"I'm afraid that's true," Gregston admitted. "It remains to be seen if we can do anything with it."

"Do you have any other news?" Jupe asked. "Nothing unexpected, if that's what you mean. We actually found a rope that was anchored to the ventilation shaft on the roof of the hotel with the help of a hook. The Raven probably soars down the rope using a carabiner. As it led down to the steeple, he ran pretty fast making it look as if he was flying."

"Is there anything the victims have in common?" the First Investigator asked further.

Gregston laughed. "They're all rich movie actresses, isn't that enough? We all fear the next victim may be Rita Lolyz."

"Rita Lolyz," Jupe said approvingly. "She could be a worthwhile victim, though. I recently read that she is one of Hollywood's highest earning women. And she has a penchant for extravagant clothes and expensive jewellery, with which she attracts attention at every public appearance. But otherwise she lives very secluded."

Gregston nodded. "Yes, no one knows exactly where she is at the moment. It is certain that she will come to Los Angeles for the Golden Raven, but she keeps her whereabouts a secret. She hates unplanned press hypes.

"When she appears, it will be a perfectly staged appearance. After that she disappears without a trace. We've already contacted her manager, but he won't tell us where Rita Lolyz is. If the Raven could figure it out, then she, or her jewellery, would be in great danger. She doesn't like big hotels and prefers to live in small, inconspicuous places, where she hopes to escape the press. Of course, the police can't protect her if she doesn't reveal where she stays."

"This may be the best protection for her," Jupiter murmured.

"Why are you so interested in this?" the detective changed the subject abruptly.

Jupiter wondered if he should tell him they were detectives. But he knew the reaction of most adults to it. Gregston was also a police officer, which probably made him doubt The Three Investigators even more. Although they also worked with the police at home in Rocky Beach from time to time, they had to convince their contact person there, Chief Reynolds, of their abilities. Eventually, the First Investigator decided not to tell Gregston about their work.

"Well, at least we were there when a crime was committed," he said and put on a hypocritical and a somewhat stupid face that made Bob and Pete smile.

They said goodbye to Detective Gregston and cycled to the *Los Angeles Times* to visit Bob's father.

He was initially very angry that Bob had broken one of the two cameras on the first day, but when The Three Investigators told him their story and then handed over the photo of the Raven, his face brightened.

"A freelance press photographer would get a lot of money for such a photo," he said pleased. "In any case, it makes up for the loss of the camera. We've heard about the Raven's new coup. I will pass on the photo immediately, and it will appear in the evening edition. Have you taken any other good photos yet?"

"Pete has a special treat for you," Bob said, grinning. "Nora Sethons in her bathrobe yelling at a cop. Just the thing for the gossip column."

Mr Andrews laughed. "You are really incredible. Again and again you get into the most unbelievable situations that every reporter would be hungry for."

"And there's nothing we can do about it," Pete said.

"But you're not going on another manhunt with me. You should only take photos, nothing else," Bob's father replied and raised his index finger for fun.

"We'll try, Dad," Bob said. "But of course we can't promise anything."

With a brand new camera, they rode their bikes once again through the chaotic traffic of the city to get to Beverly Hills. There they took a break at an ice cream parlour.

"The prices here are really incredible," Pete said when he looked at the menu. "When I think of our regular ice cream parlour in Rocky Beach, a fruit cup like this isn't even half as expensive."

"Well, it's high society living here. They can afford to pay ten dollars for a banana split," Bob jokingly said, but then his face turned. "I unfortunately do not. Because I don't have anything left. All the money I had is now in the Raven's claws, so to speak."

"I invite you," Jupe said patronizingly. "Or let's say we eat our ice cream today at the expense of our common fund, okay? The last phone bill wasn't that high, and we've got a couple of dollars left."

When the ice cream came, they dug into the food. Only Jupiter sat there in silence pinching his lower lip. That was a sure sign that he was thinking hard.

Bob noticed. "Well, what's going on in your super brain?" he asked.

"This raven story..." Jupiter murmured. "So somebody's been watching the valuable rocks of some stars. I wonder why. Does he just want to sell or keep them? Maybe he is a collector and even goes so far as to steal the jewellery of his favourite stars. Apparently he is a movie fan, otherwise he would not be so well informed about the actors and their whereabouts. Moreover, he disguises himself as a raven, which sometimes shows a penchant towards the cinema. He uses the landmark of a film festival to create a kind of mirror image, a dark brother who casts his shadow over the award of the Golden Raven."

"How philosophical," Pete thought. "What do you make of it?"

"Nothing yet. I'm just wondering what kind of guy this raven is. If we learn more about his personality, we might be able to track him down."

"First of all, he needs to get information about the stars from somewhere. He must also be athletic and have a weakness for show effects. Otherwise the raven costume makes no sense at all," Bob thought.

"Maybe the costume has a whole different meaning. Maybe he belongs to some kind of a cult—a raven clan or something," Pete suggested.

"I want your imagination," Jupe said shaking his head and scraping up the last of his ice cream.

“Come on, let’s get back on the road,” Bob suggested. “Aside of all the detective zeal, don’t forget that we have work to do. I suggest we cycle a little bit through the neighbourhood and look for opportunities. After all, we have a job to do.”

They paid and rode back to Wilshire Boulevard, which also led through Beverly Hills. Their destination was the Beverly Wilshire Hotel, one of the noblest addresses in the city.

The award ceremony for the coveted film prize was to take place there in four days. Certainly some of the expected guests had already arrived. The Three Investigators were lucky, because there was a large crowd in front of the hotel. They also saw some press photographers.

“There seems to be something going on here,” Bob remarked. “Come on, Pete, let’s take some photos quick!” They joined the crowd in front of the huge entrance area that was surrounded with lavish sculptures. Above it hung the advertising posters with the inscription ‘On whose shoulder is the raven sitting this time?’

A short time later, the crowd started to move because a black limousine drove up and stopped directly in front of the hotel. The door opened and half a dozen huge, broad-shouldered men, apparently bodyguards, got out to make their way through the crowd.

Pete snapped like crazy.

“I wonder if that’s Jodie Foster,” Jupiter joked.

A man in light summer clothes got out of the car.

“I’m going crazy,” Pete shouted. “That is...” he zoomed the camera as close to the person as possible. “That’s Mel Gibson!”

The world-famous actor pushed his way through the crowd and disappeared a few moments later into the hotel. That was the end of the commotion, and the crowd had dispersed.

“That was quick,” Bob thought. “The people here are real star tourists. They take a look at Mel Gibson and then move on to the next attraction.”

Jupiter looked at him doubtfully. “Are we much better?”

Playfully indignant, Bob replied, “We’re just working here, it makes a huge difference.”

“Mel Gibson,” Pete murmured, still impressed. “I don’t believe it.”

Bob hit him on the shoulder in a friendly manner. “He’s only human.”

“Do you think so?” the Second Investigator asked absent-mindedly, and Bob laughed, bringing Pete back to reality.

“I’m glad Kelly’s not here,” he joked. “She’d be totally freaked out.”

Jupiter looked up at the building’s façade. “I’m sure he’ll be moving into the finest suite now. Golden taps and a bed as big as a football field. I once read that the most expensive room in Beverly Wilshire costs two thousand five hundred dollars... per night!”

They rode around the city all day to take photos, but ate in a less elegant area to save money. In the early evening they returned to their hotel exhausted. At the reception they were approached by a dark-haired female hotel employee.

“Gentlemen, something has been delivered for you.” She reached under the counter and pulled out a small parcel.

“For us?” Jupe asked in astonishment.

“Yes, it has your names on it. It was outside the door this afternoon, and a guest brought it in. If you are expecting something, please tell the sender to hand it to the reception. Otherwise, it may be stolen on the street.”

“Yes. Thank you,” Jupe said absent-mindedly and accepted the parcel. It was no bigger than a hardback book.

Something rattled in it.

Bob was about to get the elevator, but Pete insisted they use the stairs. “I have to train,” he reminded his friends. “More exercise makes you slimmer,” he added with a little bump in Jupiter’s ribs. “What’s that package? Who is the sender?”

“I don’t know,” confessed Jupiter. “There’s nothing else written on it, and I don’t recognize the writing.”

“Maybe it’s from Aunt Mathilda and she’s sending you fresh underwear, Jupe,” Pete laughed. “That would be just like her.”

“Sure,” the First Investigator grinned, tormented. “And why is it that she wrote your name and Bob’s?”

Somewhat out of breath—at least for Jupiter—they reached the sixth floor and their room. There they gathered on the bed, and Jupiter pulled out his pocket knife to open the package. Something fell out.

It was a black feather.

5. A Street Named Beethoven

“The Raven!” Pete cried and took the feather. “It looks exactly like the feather from last night.”

“What else is in it?” Bob asked, leaning over the package curiously.

Jupiter poured the contents onto the bed. A cassette and a wallet fell out.

“My wallet!” Bob shouted and grabbed it. He opened it and quickly examined the contents. “Oh, great. The money’s gone.”

“And the rest?”

“Driver’s licence, passport, student ID, business cards,” Bob replied. “Nothing else is missing.”

“It’s clear that the package came from the Raven,” Jupe said. “And apparently, he’s only interested in the money.”

“And the cassette?” Pete asked, trying to reach for it, but Bob quickly held him back by the arm. “Fingerprints,” he said.

Pete smiled guiltily. “I always forget,” he confessed. “Apparently you too.” Accusingly, he pointed to the wallet Bob was still holding in his hand.

“Oh,” Bob said, grinning sheepishly. “Well, unfortunately, we don’t have our gear, and we can’t take any fingerprints.”

Jupiter shrugged his shoulders. “I don’t think that matters. Remember Detective Gregston said that the Raven had not left any prints on his break-ins yet? I assume he was just as careful this time.”

“How did the parcel get here, anyway?” Pete asked. “I mean, how does the Raven know where we are?”

“Our business cards,” Bob speculated, pulling his small supply of printed cards out of his wallet. It said:



At the back was the address of Headquarters at The Jones Salvage Yard in Rocky Beach.

“All right, so the Raven have our address at the salvage yard. But we’re in Los Angeles now, not Rocky Beach,” Pete doubted.

“Wait, I’ll find out in a moment,” Jupe said, got up and went to the phone that was on the small desk in their room. He dialed the number of Aunt Mathilda and Uncle Titus.

“Hello, this is Jupiter... No, I’m fine, Aunt Mathilda... I just wanted to know if... yeah, exactly, that’s what I was about to ask you about... Did the caller say anything else? Hmm...

No, it's all right, it's just to do with our work. All right, bye." He hung up the phone.

"As I had expected, someone called Aunt Mathilda and asked for us. She gave him the address of our hotel. So the Raven knows where to find us."

"But why?" Pete asked. "Why would he send Bob his wallet back?"

Jupiter picked up the cassette and waved it in the air. "I hope we'll find the answer here. Let's listen to the tape."

"How?" Bob wanted to know. "We don't have a recorder. Almost every hotel has a TV in the room but no stereo."

"Well, if we'd come by car, we could have heard the tape on the car stereo now," Jupe said.

"How good of you to have me." Pete grinned. "I brought my Walkman because I was hoping I could walk a little on the beach." He went to his backpack and, after some searching, pulled out the portable mini recorder. "Now only one person can hear the tape first, I don't have any speakers."

Jupiter reached for the device, but Pete held it in the air. "By the way, that's my Walkman," he said.

"But I'm the First Investigator," Jupiter replied, "and that gives me the right to listen to the tape first."

"I'm responsible for records," Bob interfered, "so documents of any kind logically fall within my purview. Give me the tape!"

"All right," Jupiter tried to settle the scramble for the cassette. "Let's listen to it together."

"How?" Pete questioned. "I didn't bring my speakers, I just said so."

"Then we'll have to build some," Jupiter replied and looked around.

"Huh?" Pete thought. "I'm not going to an electronics store now, buy the parts and assemble the speakers just so we can all listen to the cassette at the same time. It's not that important to me."

"That's not what I meant," Jupe said, a little irritated. "We just need an amplifier, something that can pick up and reproduce the sound waves. A piece of metal or... that's right, a glass!"

He jumped up and went to the mini fridge under the desk. There he found water, orange juice, sparkling wine and chocolate bars as well as a few glasses. Jupiter took out two tall, bulbous wine glasses. "This should work, the glass is pretty thin."

He set the glasses on the table and waved Pete over with the Walkman. "Watch. You just put the two earphones in the glasses. The sound waves and vibrations from earplugs are transmitted to the glass and sets it vibrating. This amplifies the sound. At least I hope so," the First Investigator added quietly. "You just have to make sure the cables don't come into contact with the glass, it'll inhibit the vibration."

Pete looked at him in astonishment. "All right, let's try it." He placed the cassette in the device, set it to full volume and then held the two ear plugs in the glasses so that they touched the bottom of the glass, but the cables hung freely.

In order not to have to hold them in his hand all the time, he simply placed them over the desk lamp. Then he turned on the Walkman.

At first, it just roared. But then they heard a man's voice, soft, a bit tinny and distorted, but clear to understand. It sounded strangely shrill and croaking. This might be due to the unusual amplification method, but could also be a peculiarity of the voice:

“The Raven flies gracefully at night;
Looking for stones, with all his might.
While everyone sleeps, the Raven is awake;
Precious gems and jewels, he will take.

“Avoiding all those evil traps;
With his beak and claws, he grasps.
Bringing the haul to his nest;
That’s what the Raven does best.

“Last night you tried really hard;
But the Raven is always on guard.
Know that you are in his ring;
There is nothing you can bring.

“You can try night after night;
But you will never get it right.
Whichever way you proceed;
The Raven will always succeed.

“Your chances can be really slim;
But the Raven knows you want him.
So here you’ll get one more chance;
With this riddle, you can advance.

“You’ll be sorry if you do not try;
The Raven’ll laugh, and you’ll cry.
Solve the riddle on the nail;
Then follow the Raven’s trail.”

It cracked on the tape, then there was music. An orchestra played a classical piece that began very furiously and a man’s voice sang in a European language, possibly German. The singer stretched the words indefinitely. Pete switched off the Walkman, although the recording was not over yet. “I guess that’s it. What do you say to that?”

“I don’t know what to say about it,” Bob confessed. “Except... why does the Raven send us this tape? Is he serious? Can we really catch him if we solve his riddle?”

“Well, what riddle?” Pete wanted to know. “I don’t see any.”

“Maybe that’s the riddle,” Jupiter surmised.

“Great, we can really do a lot with that,” Pete moaned. “Why would the Raven want us on his trail? That doesn’t make any sense.”

“We seem to have impressed him very much... especially me,” Bob said with a grin. “At least I almost caught him.”

“Sure, almost,” Pete retorted ironically. “But still, that’s no reason to encourage us to pursue him.”

"It's obviously a game," Jupe said. "He wants to prove to us that we can never catch him and the incident last night was not a serious threat to him. Perhaps he is wounded in his pride and now wants to tell the world that no one can stop him." He pinched his lower lip.

"Rewind the tape, Pete. I'll write out the lines. And be attentive, maybe you'll hear something else. Watch out for background noise."

They listened to the recording again. Every now and then Jupiter made a sign and Pete stopped the tape so that Jupiter could write the lines down. At the end they had the Raven's poem on a sheet of paper in front of them.

"Well, I haven't heard anything unusual," Bob said.

"But maybe that's not surprising with our primitive amplifiers." Bob put on the earphones and listened to the tape again. "No, nothing," he finally said. "You can't hear anything in the background."

Pete also tried, and he also shook his head at the end as well.

"Then everything the Raven has to tell us must be in this text," Jupe said, leaning over the paper. "We can forget the first four verses. I think, he's just describing what happened."

Pete suddenly laughed. "You sound like Mr Hamilton, my English teacher." Pete grimaced, which was supposed to be a caricature of his teacher, and said with a nasal voice: "In the first four verses the poet describes the events so far." Then he changed back to his normal voice. "As long as we don't have to write a paper about it, it's all right, Jupe." The three read the text several times, but they came to nothing.

"I can't even think of an approach to think about," Bob groaned. "The lyrics are perfectly clear. Where's the riddle?"

"We're idiots!" Pete suddenly interrupted him and hit his forehead with his flat hand. "Maybe there's something left on the tape!" He put the earplugs back in the glasses and let the cassette continue to run. The music was on, and they listened for a minute or two, then the Second Investigator asked, "Shall I fast-forward?"

Jupiter shook his head "We might miss something. Just keep running it, we'll hear if there's anything else."

He turned back to the written text. "Now, the only thing I notice is this: the Raven talks about himself in the third person. I wonder whether this is a clue of some sort."

The other two shrugged.

"Say, shouldn't we perhaps go to the police with the tape," Pete asked, but his tone revealed that he wasn't convinced of the idea himself.

"What are we supposed to tell the police?" Jupiter replied. "I'm sure they can't do anything with it either."

"Well, at least it's evidence," Bob threw in.

But Jupiter saw it differently: "At best it's only reference material. We don't have any proof yet. I guess we'll have to solve the mystery first."

Pete got impatient. "Riddles, riddles, riddles! But there is no riddle here! What are we supposed to solve?" He took the parcel and looked inside, but there was nothing else in it. Then he turned the raven feather undecidedly between his fingers, as if it gave him a new idea.

In silence they continued to think, while the classical music played in the background. After about a quarter of an hour, an increased use of the wind instruments led to the end of the piece, and the three became more attentive to see what came next. As the music faded away, there was a faint crackling sound that signalled the end of the recording. Then there was silence, and it lasted until the tape ended and the Walkman switched off with a click.

Pete, who was seated by the desk, turned the cassette over. Another half hour passed and they found out nothing on the other side of the tape.

When the device turned off again, Pete sighed. "You know what? I think the whole thing is a joke. The Raven is angry because we almost caught him yesterday, and now he wants to give us sleepless nights with a non-existent riddle. This is his revenge."

Jupiter shook his head slowly. "I don't think so. I'm sure there's more to it than that. Would he otherwise have gone to such lengths with the poem? He must have been sitting at his desk for a long time thinking it up. I just had an idea: The piece of music must be the riddle. He announces a riddle, and then the music comes on. So maybe we should listen to it again."

Pete got everything ready, and this time they paid close attention to the music. A choir sang, but the words were incomprehensible. None of the three understands German.

"Must be an opera," Bob suspected. "I don't understand why people listen to opera. You can't really understand a word."

"I think I've heard this piece at home before," Pete said. "My mother has it in her classics collection. It's a pretty well-known opera, isn't it?"

His friends nodded. "I've heard of it before too," Bob said. "I think there's some company doing commercials with that tune."

"For some kind of food, I think," Jupe said.

"I knew you'd remember," laughed Pete. "Hey, but maybe that's the solution. Maybe we need to find out which product is advertized with that music."

"And then?" Jupiter wanted to know.

Pete shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know."

The First Investigator waved. "It says here, 'Solve the riddle on the nail; Then follow the Raven's trail.' This means to solve the riddle quickly, and the solution to the riddle must be a trail to a location or something. Perhaps to his place of residence—his nest... or to the place where he'll strike next time.

"This week he has broken in somewhere every night, and if he wants more, he will continue to do so. The awarding of the Golden Raven is in four days. After that, the excitement will be over, and the stars will all leave."

"You mean there's a clue hidden in the music, or in the lyrics? But what should it be like? We can't understand the singing," Bob looked at Jupiter as if he expected the First Investigator to have the solution ready, as so often. But he was disappointed. Jupiter could only shrug his shoulders.

They rewound the tape again and played it to check the poem words he wrote down earlier. Then they bent over the result and puzzled over the words. They can't find a riddle among the words of the poem, so all this seemed to make no sense. They spent a lot of time with it and came up with improbable ideas, which they immediately rejected again.

At some point, Jupiter looked at his watch. "My goodness!" he exclaimed angrily. "It's after 9 pm already, and we still haven't found out anything. "It's maddening!" Angrily he threw the pencil he held in his hand on the bed and stared at the wall. "The Raven will strike again tonight if he has not already done so, and we cannot prevent it! The solution is right in front of us, it simply has to be hidden somewhere!"

"Maybe that's really nothing more than a joke that the Raven sent us, and we're biting into the wrong thing all the time," Bob speculated.

"Where is this opera from?" Pete wanted to know, yawning.

Jupiter suddenly looked up. "What?"

Pete looked at him without understanding. "What? I didn't say anything."

“No, but you asked something. Where is this opera from... did you want to know?”

Pete waved off. “It wasn’t that important to me. Now, if you want to give one of your hour-long lectures, I don’t feel like it.”

Jupiter shook his head violently. He seemed very excited. “I don’t know who wrote the opera!”

“Oh, I have to add that on my calendar,” Pete joked. “Knowledge gaps in the head of the First Investigator. But you should definitely fill that, Jupe.”

“Don’t you understand?” cried Jupiter. “I don’t know who wrote the opera, and that’s the question! That’s the riddle! The opera itself, not what is sung in it, or perhaps not what is hidden in the music! We must find out what this piece of music is called and who wrote it!”

“And then what?” Pete wanted to know.

“We’ll see about that,” replied Jupe.

“You might be right, Jupe,” Bob said. “But how do we go about this now? Who knows classical music?”

“My mother,” Pete said promptly, continuing to glance at the clock. “It’s not too late yet, I’ll call her right away.” He reached for the phone.

“Hello?” his mother said.

“Hello mum, it’s Pete.”

“Pete! Did something happen?”

“No, no, I’m sorry for calling so late, but I have an important question.”

“I haven’t gone to bed yet. What is it about?”

“You know a lot about classical music. Could you identify a piece for us from some opera? ... Wait a minute, I’ll play it for you.” He took the Walkman and held the earphones to the phone’s mouthpiece, then pressed the Play button.

The music sounded very distorted on the telephone, but Pete’s mother said after only a few seconds: “This is not an opera. It’s Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, Fourth Movement: Ode to Joy. But how did you come to this? I thought you were taking photos in Los Angeles?”

“So did we, mum. I’ll explain it to you later, okay?” Pete replied. “Thank you. I’ll take care of it. And good night!”

“Good night,” Pete’s mother said, confused, and Pete hung up.

“Not an opera,” he told his friends triumphantly. “Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. Fourth Movement: Ode to Joy. So what do we do with it now?”

“I’ve got an idea.” Jupiter reached for the map that was on the desk. “Your mother knows really well,” he said approvingly as he unfolded the map. He looked at the street directory.

“There! Beethoven Street. I knew it! I knew it! The road is by the harbour and there are many hotels there.”

He showed his friends the many little H’s that marked the location of hotels on the city map. There was a dozen of these H’s on Beethoven Street. “This is where he’s going to strike. We have to go now! Let’s follow the Raven’s trail!”

6. On the Run

“To the harbour!” Bob shouted as they ran out of the hotel. “It’s down in Venice, that’s at least ten miles! We can’t take the bikes, we’ll never get there.”

“For once, I have to agree with you on this point,” said Pete. “The bikes are too slow. Maybe we should call the police right now?”

“We could be wrong too,” gasped Jupiter. “If we call the police now, we might mess things up. Come on, let’s get a cab!”

They ran north to Wilshire Boulevard, where there were many taxis. Although the streets were still quite packed at that time, there was no traffic jam. Therefore a taxi was exceptionally faster than the bicycles. They waved at a free cab and jumped into it.

“To the harbour,” cried Jupiter, sitting in front. “As fast as you can.”

The taxi driver grinned. He was a small, stocky man in his mid-forties with a funny face. “Are you on the run?” he wanted to know and drove off.

“Not us,” Jupe said curtly.

“We’re more the pursuers. Someone else may be fleeing,” Bob explained.

“Sounds exciting,” said the taxi driver. “Who are you chasing?” Bob and Pete in the back seat looked at each other.

“You wouldn’t believe us anyway,” Pete finally said.

“It doesn’t matter,” the driver replied and laughed. “I hear the craziest stories from my passengers every day. Whether I believe them doesn’t matter at all, as long as they are interesting. By the way, I’m Jack.”

Jack drove south and turned into the Santa Monica Freeway, then reached Venice Boulevard. “Well, we’ll be right there. Where exactly do you want to go?”

“To Beethoven Street,” Jupiter explained.

“Well, who are you chasing?” laughed Jack.

“The Raven,” Pete replied.

“What raven? You mean the Raven? The one who’s robbing the rich ladies?”

“Exactly!”

“All right,” Jack said, apparently believing nothing. “I read tonight in the evening paper that he was out again last night. Someone even managed to take a photo of him. But I’m not sure if it’s a fake.”

“It’s not a fake,” Pete replied. “I took the photo.”

Now Jack laughed so unrestrainedly that The Three Investigators were afraid that he would provoke an accident out of sheer carelessness. “Rarely have I had such entertaining passengers,” he cried and calmed down slowly.

Pete decided not to go into it any further as the taxi turned into Beethoven Street.

“So, where can I let you out?” Jack wanted to know.

“My goodness,” Jupiter exclaimed. In front of them stretched a forest of hotels. The many advertising signs threw brightly coloured lights on the street. “Which is the right one?” Jupe asked.

“You’ll have to know that for yourself,” Jack replied. “I can let you off here in front, so you can walk the rest if you don’t know exactly where your raven is hiding.” He laughed out

loud again.

“Wait a minute,” Pete murmured. “Beethoven’s Ninth, Fourth movement, isn’t it? Nine, four. Try number 94.”

“Brilliant thought, Pete,” praised Jupiter. “I hope you’re right.”

Jack drove down the street, and number 94 was actually a hotel. The Three Investigators jumped out of the car immediately.

“Hey!” shouted the driver. “What about my fare?”

Pete was already running towards the entrance of the hotel, while Jupiter and Bob paid the taxi driver. The Second Investigator looked up at the façade of Venice Sunset. As expected, the hotel looked very classy. Although this was not exactly the best area of the city, the hotel was a shining exception. Suddenly Pete saw a black shadow. He flew through the air and landed on the roof of the house opposite the road.

“No!” Pete shouted and immediately ran off. Before his friends realized what had happened, he was already circling the house looking for access to the roof. At the back of the building, he ended up in a dark courtyard.

Some cars stood around, and garbage cans offered more hiding places for the Raven. But then Pete saw the shadow at the top of the fire escape which ran down from the roof. The Raven obviously had not seen him yet. Pete ran to the ladder, jumped up and grabbed a rung. He pulled himself up and climbed towards the figure. He was about four metres high when he reached the Raven. The Second Investigator grabbed his foot and held on with an iron grip. The Raven croaked in horror and began to struggle, but Pete did not let go. Suddenly the other foot of his opponent stepped on his arm. More in shock than in pain, the Second Investigator cried out and let go. The Raven took advantage of this opportunity, spread his wings and jumped over Pete into the depths. Pete was able to grasp a corner of the wing, but it was torn out of his hand immediately, and he lost his balance with the jerk. The ground was dangerously far below him, and Pete rowed helplessly with his arm for a few seconds. Only at the last moment did his hand find a ladder rung.

Pete then heard a high-pitched sound from below. It sounded like a laugh. The Raven had landed safely on the concrete floor of the courtyard. Pete climbed down as fast as he could, but when he reached the ground, the Raven had disappeared.

With still wobbly knees, the Second Investigator looked around in the darkness. Was the Raven hiding behind the cars?

Suddenly Pete heard footsteps. They came from the driveway.

“Pete!” shouted Jupiter, who came running into the yard with Bob. “Where is he?”

At that moment, they heard a door slam shut. “That came from there,” Pete shouted and ran towards a steel door in the building. He ripped it open and stumbled into a pitch-black stairwell. From above came a noise. The Three Investigators hurried up the stairs in the dark. When they reached the second floor, the bird’s shadow just opened a window on the landing. Pete ran towards him, but at the same moment the Raven jumped. By the time the Second Investigator reached the window, the Raven had already climbed down from a pile of waste paper and ran waving its wings at one of the parked cars.

“Too high!” cursed Pete. The Three Investigators raced down the stairs again, but when they reached the courtyard, the car had already disappeared through the exit into the street.

“Damn!” shouted the Second Investigator. “He got away! How could he jump down from that height?”

“Did you recognize the licence plate?” Jupe asked.

“Much too far away,” Bob replied, shaking his head regretfully. “But we’re also idiots. Why did all three of us run into this stupid house?”

Pete gritted his teeth and hammered his hand against the concrete wall of the house. “Damn!” he cursed. “None of this should have happened—” He faltered and looked at his clenched fist in surprise.

“What is it?” Bob wanted to know.

“Look!” Pete opened his fist. A small patch of black cloth came to light. “I must have ripped that from the Raven’s wing. I didn’t realize I was holding it in my hand the whole time.”

A light wind came up and drove some of the waste paper over to them, along with a black feather. Bob picked it up and twisted it between his fingers.

“This is clear,” he mumbled. “He had to leave his trademark here too. It’s like he’s trying to annoy us. And so what do we do now?”

“I don’t feel like staying here any longer. The victim—whoever she is this time—probably called the police. Let’s go home,” Pete suggested, dejectedly.

“Do you have any money?” Jupe asked him.

Pete reached into his pocket and shook his head. “Why?”

“Because I just paid half a fortune for the cab—eighteen dollars,” Jupe replied. “I had to scrape my pockets for coins to make up the amount, so it took us so long to get here. And now I have no more money, and neither does Bob. How do we get home now?”

Exhausted, Pete leaned against the wall of the house. “This can’t be happening,” he repeated.

7. Gone with the Wind

The hotel room's alarm clock rang way too early. Irritated, Jupiter tried to shut it off but he couldn't find his way around the device so he fiddled around with it for a while.

"Off!" Pete mumbled sleepily. "Turn it off!"

"I'm on it," Jupiter replied indistinctly. Finally he managed to silence the alarm clock. "My goodness," he moaned. "Only eight o'clock." He then remembered last night. "Thirty-six dollars," he added miserably.

"Don't start that again," Pete complained. "I want to sleep."

They had gone back by taxi the evening before, and Pete had quickly taken his money from the room to pay the driver. All in all they got rid of thirty-six dollars just for the taxi rides, without having achieved anything.

The First Investigator was upset about this for the rest of the evening and this had got on each other's nerves terribly. But Jupiter only thought of their common fund, from which they paid for everything related to their detective business. If this continued, they would not have enough funds, and Jupiter felt responsible for the finances. He laid in bed a while longer. Finally tormented himself out of bed and went into the shower. At breakfast in the hotel's dining room, The Three Investigators talked again about yesterday's incident.

"We really messed it up," Pete said. "Nothing came out of this, apart from another feather for our collection and a piece of black fabric—and we can't even do anything with them."

"I wonder if the Raven will call us again," Bob said. "If only we'd solved this stupid riddle sooner!"

Jupiter pinched his lower lip. "That's exactly what I don't understand," he said.

"What don't you understand? That your super brain failed this time and you only came up with the solution after a few hours?" Pete snapped.

"No. That we missed the Raven so barely," Juve replied. "If we'd solved the mystery just ten minutes earlier, we could have caught him."

"That's the annoying thing," Pete mumbled and bit listlessly into his bun.

"I've thought about that, too," said Bob, who had a hunch what Jupiter was getting at. "The Raven couldn't have foreseen when we would solve the riddle. So it seems like we actually had a real chance of catching him."

"But we failed," Pete added.

"Unless he actually knew when we were gonna show up," Bob continued, "then everything would have been just a game for him."

"How would he know that?" Pete asked. "Maybe he was watching us leave the hotel. That is, probably not the Raven himself, but perhaps a partner. He watched us and told the Raven. The Raven could then time his burglary so that it looked as if we only just missed him."

"A partner," Pete asked and looked involuntarily around the dining room, as if someone was watching him. "But what good would that do? Do you think the Raven only wanted to prove that he is better?"

“Could be. I feel like the Raven’s looking to... well, becoming famous,” said Jupiter. “He creates the Raven character to disguise himself and does almost everything to draw attention. I almost think he wants to be the secret star of this year’s film festival. And so far, it looks like he’s going to succeed. The newspapers are giving him a lot of coverage.”

“A jewel thief looking for attention,” Pete asked. “This is more of a case for a psychiatrist than a detective.”

Bob took the last sip of milk. “Anyway, we have work to do.” He stood up eagerly. “Where are we taking our photos today?”

They rode their bicycles to the Walk of Fame on Hollywood Boulevard, the legendary street where famous personalities in the entertainment industry had immortalized themselves on the footpath with a gold-rimmed star and their name. Dozens of these stars lined Hollywood Boulevard, and right now for the film festival, there were many tourists who wanted to photograph the star of their idol. But The Three Investigators were less interested in the Walk of Fame itself, but rather the people who had gathered there. The people were the far more interesting because of their behaviour which were quite ridiculous, at least in the eyes of the three detectives.

“This is incredible,” Pete said when he photographed the tourists. “Look at these people. What are they so excited about these decorated paving stones?”

“They’re fans,” Bob said.

“And then those tourists...” Pete continued. “Can somebody tell me why they always stand in front of these sights and let themselves be photographed instead of just taking photos of the house or the tree or the church, or whatever interests them?”

“Business people who wanted to prove to their family back home that they really were at the Walk of Fame,” Jupiter explained.

Throughout the day, the three were hanging out in Hollywood and the surrounding areas taking really good photos. Bob was particularly proud of the photograph of an old man wearing old-fashioned baggy trousers with embroidery and sequins. He looked doubtfully at one of the advertising posters for the festival and scratched his head. They had a lot of fun and forgot their bad moods the day before. They did not even think about the Raven when they returned to the hotel in the evening after a long meal in a Chinese restaurant. They had bought the evening edition of the *Los Angeles Times* on their way back, and Bob read the article about the Raven’s last burglary while they parked their bikes.

“So the new victim was not Rita Lolyz, but Ophelia Nors. Strange name. I have not heard of her.”

“You have not heard of Ophelia Nors?” outraged Pete. “She made some great movies last year... especially fantasy flicks.”

“That’s fine,” Bob said, then shrugged his shoulders.

“I’ll cut out the article anyway. It’ll be in our archives under the ‘Unsolved Cases’ section.”

“We are not giving this up so easily,” Jupiter reminded him.

They entered the hotel, and the young woman at the reception rose. “Good evening! There’s something for you again. I asked you to tell the sender not to leave the mail outside the door, but to bring it into the hotel.”

“Uh...” Jupiter began, and had one of his rare speechless moments. But he quickly regained his composure. “I’m afraid we haven’t been able to speak to him yet. Thank you.”

He accepted the parcel and The Three Investigators were heading to the stairs when Jupiter turned around back to the reception. “When was the parcel delivered?” he asked.

“Just now,” replied the hotel clerk. They then ran upstairs and entered their room.

“What’s in it?” Pete wanted to know, staring curiously at the small parcel. “Open it!” Jupiter opened it and as expected, a feather came out along with another cassette. “It’s like yesterday,” said the First Investigator. “But today, we’re faster. Come on, set up your stereo,” he joked.

Pete once again put together the equipment consisting of wine glasses, Walkman, earphones and desk lamp. He inserted the cassette and everyone listened eagerly. Again the croaking voice could be heard:

“You have failed, much to your dismay;
Maybe you’ll be better today;
Here’s a riddle you should know;
The big prize is stones that glow!”

The speaker then distorted his voice, very theatrically imitating a female voice:

“The raven himself is hoarse;
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements.”

Then the tape just went off. Pete didn’t turn it off hoping for another clue.

“What was that all about?” he asked. “Entrance of Duncan?” He reached for the map. “Is there a Duncan Street?” He looked in the street directory. “There are two Duncan Avenues. One in the east part of town and one down in Lynwood. There’s also a Duncan Way. Should it be that easy?”

Jupe shook his head. “I don’t think so. It’s too simple, and that wouldn’t be a mystery. No, that sounded more like a quote.”

“Perhaps from an opera again,” Pete presumed, then he remembered that the previous piece of music was not from an opera at all.

“Bob? Do you have any ideas?”

“I kind of do,” he said thoughtfully. “That seems familiar to me. Rewind the tape.”

Again they heard the puzzling recording. Then Bob’s face brightened.

“Of course,” he shouted. “That’s Macbeth!”

“Huh?” Pete wanted to know.

“Macbeth! Shakespeare’s play that we read at school last year. This should be the scene where Lady Macbeth gets a message that King Duncan of Scotland is coming to her castle. And then she speaks of Duncan’s disastrous entrance. If it was about recognizing the piece of music yesterday, then perhaps this time it is about recognizing the quote!”

“Yes, you might be right, Bob,” Jupiter agreed enthusiastically. “Of course, the Raven cannot guess that we’ll get it so quickly. Pete…”

“I’m on it,” the Second Investigator interrupted him and looked in the street directory.

“Here!” he shouted. “Macbeth Street, it actually exists! Straight to Elysian Park, very close to Dodger Stadium.”

“Is there a hotel there?” Bob asked.

Pete nodded eagerly. “There is one. And it’s not that far, three miles maybe.”

“Let’s go!” Jupiter cried, grabbing his jacket. “We’ll go right there, but this time by bike. Our financial cushion will not survive another taxi ride. But we’re in no hurry. I’m sure the

Raven doesn't expect us to be that fast. Well done, Bob." He patted him on the back with appreciation.

They left the hotel and got on their bicycles.

Pete rode ahead as usual, armed with the city map. It was already dark, and they passed brightly-lit streets that were still full of life. Neon signs turned the city into a colourful fair. They crossed the centre and reached the large Elysian Park, which also housed Dodger Stadium. The traffic density dropped abruptly. After a few looks at the map, Pete led them to Macbeth Street. The road was not very long.

They rode down the road once, but the hotel was nowhere to be seen. There were small detached houses, and it was a quiet residential area. But there was no hotel.

"Where is it now?" Bob asked when they stopped at the end of the road to take another close look at the plan.

Pete shrugged. "I don't know," he said. "According to the map, the hotel should be somewhere on the right."

They rode up and down the road again without success. The hotel was not there.

"I don't understand that! It's got to be here!"

"What's the name of the hotel?" Jupe asked.

"I don't know, it doesn't say that here," Pete answered.

A young woman was walking her dog passed The Three Investigators. Jupiter got off his bike and walked up to her.

"Excuse me," he said to her. "We're looking for a hotel that should be here. Somewhere on the right."

"Oh, you mean the Wind Hotel," said the young woman. "Stop that, Anka," she held back her dog who jumped up at Jupiter. "I'm sorry, but the hotel was demolished a year ago. It was over there where the new apartment building is now being built."

"Thank you," Jupe said irritably, returning to his friends.

"And?" Bob asked curiously.

"The hotel we're looking for is called Wind Hotel, but unfortunately it doesn't exist anymore," Jupiter explained. "It was torn down a year ago. Gone with the wind, so to speak. This map seems to be outdated, Pete. I don't know why, but obviously we're wrong here."

8. Macbeth

“Wrong?” Pete repeated. “What’s that supposed to mean? This is Macbeth Street! The Raven set us up!”

“Or we didn’t solve the riddle correctly,” Bob threw in.

“Maybe we were on the wrong track. Darn, now we don’t have the tape with us,” Jupiter added.

“If Macbeth isn’t the answer, then what is? Bob, are you sure the quote came from that play?” Pete asked.

Bob nodded. “I’m sure as I only read it last year—and by the way, my assignment on it was the second best in the whole class.”

“So what’s the mistake then?” the Second Investigator wanted to know. “I’m starting to feel stupid. We’re running after that raven like we’re his puppets. He can lead us anywhere he wants. What if it’s a trick after all?”

Jupiter shook his head. “It wasn’t a trick yesterday,” he recalled. “He wants something from us. For some reason, it’s important to him that we follow his trail. But maybe that’s secondary, we had better try to solve this damn riddle!”

“Wait,” Pete began slowly. “How did we figure that yesterday? The music that we heard yesterday, which was not an opera at all, was written by Beethoven. Beethoven Street was the solution to the riddle. And now the Raven croaking under some battlements comes from Macbeth. And who wrote that? Chaucer?”

“Shakespeare!” Bob and Jupiter said at the same time.

“Of course,” Jupiter continued. “Shakespeare! Pete, check the map!”

Immediately he unfolded the city map and looked again at the street index. “Sh... Sha... Shakespeare Drive! Here it is. This is really incredible! D-15... D-15...” Pete turned the map around and searched the grid squares. “Here. And there’s actually a hotel! It’s over in San Marino. Five to six miles, I guess.”

“Great,” Jupiter moaned. “I’m completely exhausted riding up here. Five to six miles!”

“I’m getting my money’s worth,” said Pete, grinning.

Then he got back up on the saddle and rode off, ignoring the others who were following him. When they reached Shakespeare Drive less than half an hour later, Pete was a little out of breath too, although he had held back so as not to leave Bob and Jupiter behind.

“I can do this!” Jupiter moaned. “Never again will I cycle to Los Angeles. Did you hear that? Never again!” He wiped the sweat off his forehead. “If we go on like this, I can also take part in the triathlon championships. So, where’s the hotel now? I want to get off this saddle!”

Shakespeare Drive was quite short and they found the hotel right away. As they had expected, this building also gave a very expensive impression. When he saw the golden letters illuminated by a spotlight on a marble plaque above the entrance, Jupiter laughed. It said ‘Hotel Macbeth’, probably in reference to the street name.

“See, we weren’t that bad,” said the First Investigator. They got off their bikes and walked towards the entrance.

“One of us should stay outside and keep an eye on the façade, especially the roof,” Pete suggested. “I volunteer.”

Jupiter nodded. “Good. Bob and I are going in.”

The two of them entered the foyer. It was lined with dark blue carpet. However, it was rather unadorned, but made a cool but noble impression. They quickly went to the reception. A man in a black suit looked at them.

“Can I help you?” he asked curtly.

“Am I right in assuming that you have a famous movie actress living here?” Juve asked bluntly. Without waiting for an answer, he continued: “We have a reasonable suspicion that this lady and her precious possessions are in danger.”

On the way here, the First Investigator had already thought about how to confront the hotel employee. Since he didn’t make a very serious impression in his sweaty clothes, he had decided to take on a surprise tactic.

Before the receptionist could say anything, Jupiter continued: “Have you heard of the Raven? The jewel thief who breaks into hotels at night to steal from rich actresses who don’t keep their jewellery in the hotel safe? This man will try to break in here tonight. You should warn the lady in question immediately.”

The receptionist, who until now had only caught his breath a few times like a fish out of water, finally put in a word: “Wait a minute! Who are you, and what is it that makes you so bold as to come here and tell me this nonsense?”

“It doesn’t matter who we are. We just want to warn you and the lady, otherwise she’ll be the next victim. You’d better do something fast.”

Despite the incredible confidence that Jupiter had spoken, the receptionist was only partially upset. “And what do you think it should be, my boy?” he asked.

“Warn her and call the police... which means I’d better do it myself.” Bob, who had been standing by silently so far, looked wide-eyed at the First Investigator.

The police? Jupiter felt that they still had no evidence in their hands, and it was too early to alert the police. However he had obviously put everything on one card as it was the only way to convince the receptionist.

“I’ll do it,” Bob said quickly, because he was not keen to talk to the hotel employee himself. He’d rather leave that to the First Investigator. He quickly reached for the telephone that stood on the marble plate at the counter.

Before the man could stop him, Jupiter said: “I’ll pay for the call. Bob, call Detective Gregston!”

Bob pressed zero and got the operator. He placed a call to Delong Street Police Station. When an officer answered, Bob asked for Detective Gregston. It clicked on the line and shortly, he heard the familiar voice, “Gregston!”

“Good evening, sir, this is Bob Andrews. I’m one of the three boys who picked up the Raven’s photos yesterday morning.”

“Ah, hello Bob. You’re lucky to catch me. If I hadn’t worked overtime today, I’d be home by now. What is it?”

“We know where the Raven is,” Bob replied.

“Excuse me?”

“Sir, this is a very long story, and I promise I will tell it to you if you get here as soon as possible. My friends and I are at the Macbeth Hotel on Shakespeare Drive in San Marino.”

“You’re not gonna kid me, are you?” Gregston asked, confused.

“Certainly not, sir. Please believe me.”

“All right. I’m coming.”

Bob hung up and smiled at the receptionist. "The police are on their way," he said.

The hotel employee stared at him first, then at Jupiter and then again at Bob. "You're gonna get in big trouble for this bad prank, boys, I swear to you."

Fifteen minutes later, Detective Gregston arrived with three of his men. Jupiter and Bob intercepted him at the hotel entrance, where Pete was already waiting for them. As quickly and precisely as possible, Jupiter told the policeman the story that had happened so far. Then he explained to him about The Three Investigators and their detective business. Obviously, there were doubts in the eyes of the detective. Finally, Jupiter offered to call Chief Reynolds in Rocky Beach to convince Gregston that The Three Investigators were to be taken seriously.

But Gregston waved. "I don't want to ring a colleague out of bed in the middle of the night. I believe you for now, but we'll have to talk about it later." With that, he and his colleagues walked past them and entered the hotel. The Three Investigators followed Gregston.

"I believe you already know the story," Detective Gregston turned directly to the receptionist. "Now may I ask you to help us with our work and tell me if an actress is staying here."

"Of course," he said courteously, smiling at Gregston nicely. "You see, I just didn't want the kids..."

"It's all right," Gregston interrupted him abruptly. "Would you give me the lady's room number, please?" The hotel employee turned to his computer and retrieved some information. "We have two famous actresses here," he said. "But one of them left all her valuables in the safe.

The other is Sandra Rabstribе, who is at Room 401 in the presidential suite."

"Thank you," Detective Gregston said curtly and went to the elevator. The police and The Three Investigators followed him.

"Sandra Rabstribе!" Pete whispered to Bob and shoved his elbow into his side. "Awesome!"

They took the elevator to the fourth floor and reached Room 401. Gregston knocked. Nothing happened. He knocked again. "Yes," an unfriendly voice rang out behind the door. "Wait a minute!" Then the door opened and in front of them stood Sandra Rabstribе, the actress who had become famous not only for her movies but also as a singer. The Three Investigators hardly recognized her without make-up and with dishevelled hair.

"Miss Rabstribе? Forgive the late intrusion, but we have a strong suspicion that someone will break into your room tonight. May we come in, please?"

"How dare you get me out of bed in the middle of the night!" Miss Rabstribе said excitedly. "And who would want to break into my room?"

"The Raven," Gregston replied dryly and Miss Rabstribе turned pale.

"Oh God, my diamond necklace," she whispered.

"There's a draught," Jupiter remarked. "Did you leave the window open?"

Miss Rabstribе looked at him irritated, but then she nodded. "Yes, I can't sleep with the window closed."

Jupiter glanced into the suite and suddenly noticed a shadow behind the bedroom door. He rushed past Miss Rabstribе and ran into the room. A black figure with a beak mask was leaning over the opened jewellery box on the bedside table.

"There he is," Jupiter shouted and ran towards the Raven. Since the bed was between them, Jupiter wanted to leap over the bed to catch the Raven. But he got his foot caught on the edge of the bed and landed on the mattress with his arms outstretched.

“Damn!” he cried out, and the Raven chuckled.

Gregston and his men stormed into the bedroom. The Raven made something glitter disappear behind his wing and jumped out the window, just as one of the policemen tried to reach him. The Raven went out and flew through the air to the opposite roof in the blink of an eye. Instead of the Raven, the policeman only managed to get hold of a feather.

“Quick! Go down,” Gregston shouted and stormed out of the room, passing Bob and Pete. Two policemen followed him. Now the distraught Miss Rabstrie entered the bedroom.

“What happened?” Pete called out excitedly, but instead of answering, Jupiter got up and ran to the window. Together they looked out, but could no longer see the Raven in the darkness. Instead, they heard an engine roar, followed by the sound of squealing tyres. They didn’t see the car itself. Only now did the detective and his men reach the street. Too late, the Raven was long gone.

Sandra Rabstrie examined her jewellery box and suddenly she screamed deafeningly aloud: “My necklace! It’s gone!”

The Three Investigators looked at each other and silently agreed to let the policemen take care of the actress. The last thing they needed now was a hysterical movie diva.

“By a hair’s breadth,” mumbled Jupiter as he stood in the hallway with Pete and Bob. “If only I hadn’t stumbled. We narrowly missed the Raven again. It’s like a jinx!”

Some time later, the dejected Gregston came back. “He got away from us,” he said. “Damn it!”

Suddenly the opposite door opened and a woman with a Rasta hairstyle stuck her head out into the hallway. “What’s that noise in the middle of the night?” she said angrily.

Pete stared at her. “Whoopi Goldberg!” he whispered excitedly.

“Oh gosh! Fans!” she moaned and closed the door.

9. An Odyssey with Words

After the police completed their work on site, the officers had kindly loaded the bicycles of The Three Investigators into their vehicles, so they did not have to cycle through the city at night. They stopped at their hotel to pick up the Raven's tapes. Now they were seated opposite the detective in his cluttered office, describing the events to him in detail. He listened calmly, but when they had finished, his face darkened.

"It may be that you have already solved a couple of cases in Rocky Beach and have been quite successful there," he said. "But this is Los Angeles. Nearly nine million people live here, and a whole bunch of them are really freaking out. I know what I'm talking about, I experience the most incredible things in my job every day. And I learned one thing in the process: do not trust anyone! I don't know if the Raven is dangerous. But the mere fact that he is not yet behind bars should be a warning. You should have contacted the police when you first heard from him!"

"We just thought the tape wasn't evidence yet," Bob tried to defend.

"That's right. It's not proof either. But that's not what I'm talking about. Solving crimes is a police matter, at least here in Los Angeles," Gregston said.

"Would you have believed us?" Jupe asked straight out.

"Excuse me?"

"Would you have believed us if we had showed up yesterday with this tape? How likely would it be that you had not taken our word and thought that the tape was a forgery we made up to make us important?" Jupiter looked at him seriously. "I understand what you mean, Detective Gregston, but you need to understand us, too. Over the past few years, we have experienced time and again that adults only believe us when we have solid evidence in our hands. Before that, our work is dismissed as children's stuff. So we've got a habit of gathering evidence before we call the police."

Gregston nodded slowly. "Well, I'll give you that, Jupiter," he said approvingly. "I admit, I don't know exactly how I would have reacted if you'd shown up yesterday with the tape. But in the future, please contact me immediately if you get another message. Is it a deal?"

"All right, sir," Jupe said.

"Good. Then you are hereby discharged." Detective Gregston looked at his watch. It was just before two. "My goodness. Someday I'm gonna quit. For my overtime, I can now take a whole year off—if I could."

They said goodbye and tiredly, The Three Investigators rode their bicycles back the short distance from the police station to their hotel.

"If only we'd figured it out differently and gone straight to Shakespeare Drive instead of Macbeth Street," Pete murmured wearily as they entered their room. "Then we would have caught him."

"Do you think so?" Jupe asked, looking as if he was trying hard to think about something. But after a short time fatigue overwhelmed him too, and so darkness and silence prevailed in their room after five minutes.

The next morning Jupiter didn't hear the alarm for a long time. His subconscious skilfully incorporated ringing into a dream. There was the ringing of an ice cream van that drove past Jupiter again and again, although he already had five ice cream cones in his hand and had to eat them very quickly before they melt. But as soon as he had eaten an ice cream, the ice-cream man came and pressed another cone into his hand that was even bigger than the last one.

A pillow flung to his head ripped the First Investigator out of his dream.

"Turn off the damn alarm clock, Juve!" shouted Pete. "I can't take the ringing anymore!" It took Jupiter a few seconds to find his way around. He then silenced the alarm clock.

They had gone to bed so late that they allowed themselves a few more hours of sleep. So Jupiter turned around and fell asleep again a few seconds later.

He woke for the second time, this time from the sound of the shower. When he opened his eyes, he felt fresh and rested. It was already after ten o'clock, and even though they had to catch up on sleep, they had many things to do. Half an hour later they were all showered and dressed and were about to go down to the dining room for breakfast when the door knocked twice. Bob opened.

"Good morning," said the bellhop outside the door. "Something's been left for you." He held out a parcel towards Bob.

Bob's heart jumped. A new message from the Raven! He took the package in his hand. The bellboy looked at him expectantly, and Bob remembered that he was hoping for a tip. But the page boy was paid for his work anyway and their common fund did not allow him to spend money unnecessarily at the moment, Bob decided. So he just gave the boy a friendly smile. "Thank you very much," he said and closed the door in front of the disappointed bellhop.

Pete and Jupiter were curiously behind Bob.

"A new tape from the Raven," Jupiter cried. "Give me that!" He snatched the parcel from Bob's hand and was about to tear it open when Pete held back his arm.

"Do you think it's a good idea to open the package? Remember what we promised Detective Gregston last night. We're supposed to get back to him as soon as we get a new message."

"Well, we can do that. But first we have to check if there is a message inside at all," Jupiter replied. "They might as well be underpants from Aunt Mathilda," he added and grinned. But a look at the writing of the three names on the small package, it certainly did not come from Aunt Mathilda. "Seriously, I don't think it's gonna hurt to be the first to look at the contents."

Determined, he opened it.

As The Three Investigators had expected, the obligatory raven feather came out, as did a new cassette. "And it certainly doesn't hurt if we listen to the tape before we go to the police," Jupiter continued.

Pete quickly set up their improvised amplification system. "Strange," he said. "Yesterday and the day before yesterday, the parcel did not arrive until the evening. This time it came in the morning. It almost looks as if the Raven wants us to solve his riddle a little earlier today."

"Let's wait and see," Juve said. "Maybe it's not a riddle at all. Here, put in the tape." He was already looking for a piece of paper and a pencil to write down. Pete turned on the Walkman and they heard the familiar voice:

“Again, you were a bit too late.
The Raven simply cannot wait.
For the season will end soon,
And he’ll be over the moon.

“The Raven delivers this last egg.
For it will lead to something big.
These words you should not ignore;
After this, there will be no more.

“The prize couldn’t be higher now.
It will be a big cash cow.
You may wonder what it is;
The gems and jewels of Rita Lolyz.

“You can try through thick and thin;
Believe that you can still win.
Always start with the A;
So let us begin, come what may.

“Not a raven but has a long beak;
It’s just a rabbit, so to speak.
In the mountains, where eagles stay;
When cats and dogs come out to play.

“He’s the first man with a name;
Clocks and watches tell the same.
Go break some eggs for this;
For a Parisian Christmas bliss.

“With a metal as expensive as gems;
Take a cruise on the Thames.
The Acropolis is indeed sublime;
It’s neither acid nor alkaline.

“The Grim Reaper shows no mercy;
To end a quarrel is what you bury.
It belongs to us, not theirs;
A document that list the heirs.

“It’s here where the day begins.
With no gains and no wins.

Now that's all you need to know;
Time's running out, on with the show!"

"Heavens!" cried Pete. "What was that? I can't make anything out of it!" He looked at Jupiter expectantly.

"I'm afraid I don't either," he confessed ruefully.

10. The Glorious Three

Pete ate cereal, Bob drank milk listlessly, and Jupiter chewed on the last bite of his roll for over a minute. They remained silent, and each had his own thoughts. Everyone tried to solve the riddle. They had listened to it a few more times and Jupiter had written it down on a piece of paper. Then they went down for breakfast, as Jupiter had claimed that one cannot solve riddles on an empty stomach. The list of riddles was now lying next to his plate, and he stared at it again and again. He didn't want to think of anything other than the lines, not even after the second roll.

Jupiter finally muttered. "There are nine verses. The first four seems to encourage us to pursue this case. There are two important points here: First, '... the season will end soon' tells us that this could be the Raven's last raid. Second, he mentions Rita Lolyz—possibly as the next victim. The last line of the fourth verse says 'So let us begin...' That indicates that the riddles are found in verses five through nine.

"Some bits seem to make sense," he continued. "For example: 'A document that list the heirs'—it's a will. But what's with the line before that? 'It belongs to us, not theirs'—this probably tells us whose will it is. But who's 'us'?"

Bob shrugged his shoulders. "I don't understand it either." He leaned over the paper. "Look at the first verse: a rabbit with a beak? In the mountains, cats and dogs come out to play? Really strange. I can't think of anything!"

Pete was silent, but they both saw that he was thinking hard as well. Although guesswork wasn't his favourite pastime, he was still eager.

"What if we just go to the police?" Bob continued. "We're gonna have to do that anyway."

"Yes... after we solve the riddle," Jupe said firmly.

"Why?" Bob asked. "It looks like we're out of the case anyway. Let them deal with the text."

"Then where do we stand?" Jupiter replied.

"So? Are you worried about your detective's pride?" Bob said. "If Detective Gregston wants to take the case, he should solve the mystery."

"But then it will look like we didn't make it," Pete interjected.

"We haven't made it—at least not yet." Jupiter shook his head vigorously. "No," he said, decisively. "We have solved the last two riddles and we will solve this one too... especially when we have a good chance of catching the Raven. After all, he hardly breaks into anything before dark. So we still have a good ten hours to solve the mystery. And that's what we're gonna do."

"So it's about your pride after all," Bob remarked, but then said nothing more.

Again they remained silent for a while, until Pete finally thought: "Maybe we are approaching this matter wrongly. Maybe we're thinking too straight. Maybe... we have to solve the riddle in a different way."

Jupiter made a tormented face. "Could you be more specific?"

"Unfortunately not. I just thought so." Pete took the list and read it again. "What is this supposed to mean, for example: 'Always start with the A'—Hey! Maybe we have to sort the

lines alphabetically? Maybe it makes sense then?"

Jupiter's face brightened. "Not a bad idea at all," he said and immediately reached for the list to check Pete's idea. "From verses five through nine, for example, if I sort the lines in alphabetical order, I'll have the first one beginning with 'A', followed by 'C', 'F', and 'G'. Let's see, the result is: 'A document that list the heirs; Clocks and watches tell the same; For a Parisian Christmas bliss; Go break some eggs for this.'"

They thought about it for a while, and Jupiter repeated the lines. "Does that make sense?" he asked.

"I'm afraid not," Bob said. "But when I think about it... the lines don't make any sense when they're in their original verses or when they are sorted in alphabetical order like what you just did."

"The individual lines seem to tell something," Jupiter concluded, "but the verse as a whole doesn't make sense at all. So we should first deal with the lines individually and then look further. Maybe something will come out of it."

Jupiter pulled out a pencil from his pocket, then he reached for another piece of paper. "Okay, let's try it. 'Not a raven but has a long beak' What could that be?"

"Anything," Pete found. "There are a thousand birds with long beaks. That's not specific, let's take the next one."

"'It's just a rabbit, so to speak'," Jupiter quoted. "Now if we look at this line by itself, we can disregard the beak in line one."

"It's just a rabbit," Pete repeated. "What types of rabbits are there, or what is another word for a rabbit?"

"A bunny?" Bob interrupted. "Or a hare?"

"Sounds plausible." Jupiter noted both words as possibilities and then read the next line: 'In the mountains, where eagles stay'. That's the nest, I'd say, or an eyry, as an eagle's nest is also called." The others nodded, and Jupiter wrote down both words. "Next, 'When cats and dogs come out to play.' Any ideas?"

"Perhaps it has to do with the idiom 'raining cats and dogs'?" Bob suggested. "Perhaps it means 'when it rains...'"

"Good!" said Jupiter. "I'll note down 'rain'."

Jupiter continued. "Next, we're onto the next verse. 'He's the first man with a name'. Maybe Neanderthal?"

"I think it's more of a real name. The first human? That was Adam, according to the Bible," Bob said. Jupiter wrote down 'Adam'.

"'Clocks and watches tell the same'," Jupiter read the next line.

"Time!" all three of them said and laughed.

It was at this moment that the young woman, who usually attended at the reception desk, approached them. Today she worked in the dining room. "Can I get you anything else?" she asked.

The Three Investigators said no. Then the woman took a look at the list. "Are you solving a crossword puzzle?"

"Something like that," Jupiter replied and smiled. "Do you happen to have any thoughts on this?" He pointed to the next line.

"'Go break some eggs for this'?" the young woman laughed. "Hah! We break eggs all the time in the kitchen. We have baked eggs, scrambled eggs, poached eggs, omelettes, all sorts of desserts use eggs as well, including cakes."

"I guess as much," Jupiter remarked and wrote all that down. "Thank you very much!" he said. Seemed to be a long list, but they'll sort it out later.

The hotel clerk laughed. "I wish you lots of fun. If you win a car or a trip, I want to be a part of it." She left the table of the three boys.

"If she only knew..." Pete said. "Unfortunately, this is not about cars or travel, but about the pride of The Three Investigators. She probably won't want anything to do with that. What's the next line, Jupe?"

"For a Parisian Christmas bliss," said Jupiter. "Hmm... Parisian—Paris... France—French... A French Christmas bliss. What's the French word for Christmas? Noël. Perhaps that's it." Bob and Pete nodded.

"Okay, we're done with the second verse. On to the next," Jupiter continued. "'With a metal as expensive as gems'."

"Well, that must be gold," Bob suggested. "Gold and gems are used in jewellery—and they are both expensive. Also gold is a metal." Jupiter wrote it down.

"We're getting better at this," Pete remarked. "What's next?"

"Take a cruise on the Thames," Jupiter read. "The Thames is a river in London. I suggest noting down 'river' and 'London'." Bob and Pete agreed.

"The Acropolis is indeed sublime," Pete read out the next line. "What's that supposed to mean? Acropolis? That's the name of every Greek restaurant. Isn't that something in Greece?"

Bob nodded. "The Acropolis is an ancient building and it is in Athens," he explained. "I read that once before."

"So 'Athens'," Jupiter mumbled and wrote it down. Then he continued: "'It's neither acid nor alkaline'."

"This one's simple," Pete remarked. "If it is not acid and not alkaline, it has to be neutral. Well, I'm not so bad in chemistry," he said with a grin. Jupiter nodded approvingly and noted down the word 'neutral'.

"We're on to the third verse," said Jupiter. "'The Grim Reaper shows no mercy'. Hmm..." There was an extended silence.

"Leave that out for now," Pete suggested. "Next line!"

"To end a quarrel is what you bury," read Jupiter. "To end a quarrel is to bury the hatchet! So the word is 'hatchet'!"

Pete nodded. "Hopefully in the end, we get something out of it. Keep going!"

"It belongs to us, not theirs," Jupiter continued.

"Another straightforward one," Bob said. "If it belongs to us, it's ours!"

"Not bad at all," Jupe said. "Thank you very much!"

"The next line is 'A document that list the heirs'. That's easy, I've already had that earlier—a will," Jupe said.

Bob added, "Or another word for it is 'testament'." Jupiter noted both words.

"We're now at the last verse," Jupe said. "The first line says 'It's here where the day begins'. The beginning of the day? Where does the day begin?"

"Well, in the morning," Pete said.

"That's not a place," Bob threw in. "The clue says 'It's here'. Maybe it's Japan? Japan is also called the land of the rising sun."

"Yes, and do you know why?" Jupe asked. "Because it's in the east. The solution could be 'east'. It's at the east where the day begins!"

"Next up: 'With no gains and no wins'," continued Jupiter.

"Losses," Bob said. "Quite clear on this one." Jupiter noted it down.

"As for the last two lines: 'Now that's all you need to know; Time's running out, on with the show!', I guess they have nothing to do with the riddle." Jupe said.

“Let’s get back to the two lines we haven’t solved,” Jupiter suggested. “‘Not a raven but has a long beak’. What could that be?”

“A stork,” Pete replied immediately. “I don’t know why, but that’s the first thing I think of when I think of a bird with a long beak.”

“Fine, let’s try it,” Jupe said and wrote down the word. “And then this is missing: ‘The Grim Reaper shows no mercy.’ Is he just talking about what the Grim Reaper stands for? Death? I’ll give it a try.” He wrote the term in the gap that he had left for it. “Now let us guess. All right, let’s see what we’ve got.”

He put the paper in the centre of the table after clearing away the bread basket and butter. The following words from the 18 lines were recorded:

Stork
Bunny, Hare
Nest, Eyry
Rain
Adam
Time
(A list of egg dishes)
Noël
Gold
River, London
Athens
Neutral
Death
Hatchet
Ours
Will, Testament
East
Losses

“Now what?” Bob wanted to know after staring at the list for a while. “These words have nothing to do with each other.”

Jupiter shrugged. “I’m afraid I have to agree with that,” he confessed while still focussing on the list of words. He closed his eyes for a while, and then suddenly opened them wide. He grabbed the list and held it so that the others could not see it.

“Hey!” called Bob. “What are you doing?”

“Put the list down,” Pete demanded so loudly that some hotel guests turned to them in astonishment.

“Can you turn it down a little?” Jupiter cried looking at the list again. Slowly, he began to smile.

“What’s the matter?” Pete wanted to know.

“The solution...” Jupiter replied calmly, but paused to savour that moment while Pete and Bob stared at him.

Eventually he continued: “Now I know what this means: ‘Always start with the A’.” He pointed to the line on the list. “What the Raven means is that the first letter of the word ‘Always’ is the ‘A’. ‘Always start’—tells us that the start of the word ‘Always’ is the ‘A’. This means that we are dealing with an acrostic!”

Pete stared at him with his eyes wide open. “A what?”

“This list of words is an acrostic,” Jupiter repeated. “The word ‘acrostic’ is from Greek and it means that the certain letters in each line can be put together to form a word or phrase. In this particular case, it’s the first letter of the words on each line!”

Pete rolled his eyes. “Then why didn’t you say so? You have to do this all the time—”

“Look at our list. On some lines, we have more than one word,” Jupiter interrupted him. “If I take ‘Hare’ instead of ‘Bunny’; ‘Eyry’ instead of ‘Nest’; ‘River’ instead of ‘London’; ‘Testament’ instead of ‘Will’...” Jupiter explained, while crossing out the unwanted words. “And the last we have is a list of egg dishes... and suppose I choose ‘Omelette’ here, see what we have now?”

The list now showed:

Stork
Hare
Eyry
Rain
Adam
Time
Omelette
Noël
Gold
River
Athens
Neutral
Death
Hatchet
Ours
Testament
East
Losses

Very clearly, Bob and Pete could see that it’s ‘SHERATION GRAND HOTEL’!

“Jupe!” Pete shouted, forgetting that he was actually upset about the arrogant nature of the First Investigator. He grabbed the paper from his friend’s hand to check the solution. “Indeed,” he said. “First, you’re just brilliant!”

Bob patted Jupiter on the shoulder approvingly. “Well done, Jupiter!”

The First Investigator smiled smugly, then he gave a grin. “I admit you helped solve the mystery too. We’re the Glorious Three.” He stood up enterprisingly.

“Now let’s go get the Raven!”

11. Pete Goes Missing

“The Raven probably thought we needed all day for the riddle,” Pete proudly announced when The Three Investigators were sitting in Detective Gregston’s office. “So we have a lot of time to prepare. How will we proceed?”

Gregston raised an eyebrow in surprise. “We?” he asked. “Who are you talking about?”

“Well,” Pete smiled, embarrassed. “You, your people and the three of us.”

“I don’t think you should be there when we grab the Raven,” Gregston replied. “This is police business.”

“But, sir,” Jupiter began. “We don’t think we want to handcuff the Raven. We just want to be there.”

Gregston shook his head. “No way. Do you know the Sheraton Grand Hotel?”

Bob nodded. “Yeah, that’s right by the World Trade Centre. A rather confusing architecture.”

“Exactly. The hotel is extremely confusing. For the Raven, there would be a thousand possibilities to weave around the tall buildings. So we have to be very careful. I’m gonna need a lot of people to guard the hotel. At the same time, it must not be conspicuous. I just don’t have a use for the three of you. I’m sorry, but you’d only be in the way,” said Gregston.

“We’re not small children,” Pete complained. “Do you really think we would interfere with your work?”

“That’s not the point,” the detective disagreed. “I’m concerned about your safety.”

“But nothing can happen,” the Second Investigator replied stubbornly.

Gregston’s expression darkened. “Now, listen to me. This is Los Angeles, and there’s going to be a police operation tonight at the Sheraton Grand Hotel. Whether it is dangerous or not—we will only know afterwards. Children have no business there!” His voice sounded so forceful that no one dared to say anything. In a conciliatory tone, he added: “I am very grateful to you for your help, and the police will certainly show their appreciation in some way for it, but I cannot take you with me on this mission. If anything should happen to you, however unlikely it may be, it will cost me my job. I’ll get back to you as soon as we get him. Give me your phone number at the hotel and I’ll call you right back. I promise!”

Dejected, Jupiter wrote him the number, then said goodbye to Gregston and left his office.

“What a bummer,” the First Investigator mumbled when they were out on the street. “With Chief Reynolds, that wouldn’t have happened.”

“That’s right,” Bob agreed with him. “But if he were to get in trouble because of us, I can understand him somehow.”

“But we did all the work!” Jupiter exclaimed. “And we can’t be at the grand finale. That’s typical.” He stared angrily into the air for a while, then he turned to his friends a little calmer. “So what do we do now?”

“Run,” Pete said. “I’m tired of taking photos and hunting ravens. I’m gonna put on my running shoes, go to the beach and practise. I don’t care what you do.” With this, he swung himself into the saddle and rode back to the hotel without waiting for the others.

“Holiday frenzy,” Bob said. “We should leave him alone this afternoon, otherwise he’s useless for the rest of the day. He has to relieve stress now, and Pete can do that best by running.”

Jupiter shook his head. “I’ll never understand that.”

During the day, Jupiter and Bob were out alone in town taking photos. This time they were at the many small parks in Los Angeles where many promotional events for the film festival took place. Jupiter’s mood slowly improved as Bob kept telling him that they had solved the case. The arrest of the Raven was just a formality and they could confidently leave that to the police. “Besides, we’ll be notified, and maybe we can go to the police station right away. After all, I’d like to see the Raven without a mask.”

On the way back, they rode by the *Los Angeles Times* to visit Bob’s father and gave him several rolls of films. They told him the news about the Raven.

“But don’t send any reporters,” Bob warned. “Otherwise, we’ll get in trouble.”

“I won’t send them directly, if you insist,” Mr Andrews replied. “But let’s just say I’ll make sure there are someone nearby.” He grinned broadly. “After all, I can’t afford to miss this opportunity. Have you ever thought about becoming a reporter? So far you’ve been doing a good job.”

When they returned to the hotel in the early evening, Pete was already there. He was lying on the bed reading. “Hello,” he greeted them in a good mood. His anger had apparently gone.

“Hi. Well, calm again?” Bob asked.

Pete nodded guiltily. “I’m sorry I freaked out like that and just took off. I hope you survived the afternoon without me.”

“Sure. If you’re in a better mood now, then everything’s fine. Jupe has also recovered. After all, the whole thing isn’t so bad. We solved the mystery of the Raven. We can be proud of that, can’t we? Let Gregston grab him. Who cares? As long as my father writes the article about it, and we are mentioned, I am satisfied.”

“All right.” Pete sat up. He felt that the mood between them was fine again. Running had relaxed him and Jupiter seemed to have gotten over his anger. Bob was rarely upset anyway.

“What do you think? Should we sneak around the Sheraton Grand tonight? At a safe distance, of course, so Gregston won’t see us. Diagonally opposite the hotel is the Bonaventure, the five-tower glass building. I bet there’s a café up on the roof or something,” Bob suggested. “If we get there, we’ll have an excellent view of the Sheraton Grand and can follow what happens.”

“Agreed.” Jupiter nodded. At that moment the phone rang. Jupiter answered it. “Ah, Lys,” he said, pleased. “How come you’re calling me here? Where did you get... Oh, Aunt Mathilda, I see.”

Bob and Pete exchanged meaningful glances. They decided to stop listening and continue talking. They discussed about the night’s activities and visualized how the police could capture the Raven, sometimes running wild with their imaginations. After about a quarter of an hour, a loud “What?” from Jupiter ripped them out of their conversation. They looked up for a moment, but then talked further because they thought Jupiter had an argument with Lys, and they were better off not interfering. It wasn’t until Jupiter hung up that they looked at him. The First Investigator stared into space. He had narrowed his eyes, and very slowly, as if in slow motion, his hand moved up to his mouth to work on the lower lip.

“Jupe?” Bob asked carefully. “Is something wrong?” The First Investigator did not answer, but continued to stare at the wall, while his thumb and index finger continued the

circular movements on his lip. He remained in this position for about two minutes. Then he looked up, and only now did he seem to notice his friends.

“Hello, Jupe, are you still there?” Pete asked. “What happened?”

“He tricked us,” Jupiter replied slowly. “The Raven has tricked us!”

12. A Change of Plans

“Wha...” Pete asked. “What do you mean?”

Again Jupiter seemed to have fallen rigid.

“Please, Jupe, don’t make that I-am-thinking-and-should-not-be-disturbed face! It’s all just a show. Do you think we haven’t noticed yet? You just want torture us because you know more than we do and just can’t resist the temptation to keep us in suspense!”

The First Investigator looked at Pete, then at Bob. “We gotta go now!” he called out and jumped up. “Come on, come on,” he urged as he put on his jacket and stowed the city map in his pocket.

“But where to?” Bob protested, who understood as little as Pete on what it was about. “To the Sheraton Grand?”

Jupiter shook his head. “No, not there for sure. We must hurry! Come on, I’ll explain it to you on the way!” He was already at the door and disappeared into the hall, so they had no choice but to follow him. They only caught up with him when he walked out of the foyer into the street and to the bicycles.

“Jupe!” cried Pete. “I hate this! Tell us what’s going on right now!”

“Lys called,” he replied as he unlocked his bike.

“We know that,” Pete replied. “And? Do you have to go to her right now, because she can’t stand it any longer? And why do we have to be there?”

Jupiter got on on his bike and set off. “Follow me!” he shouted.

Again, the two had no choice but to do exactly that. The First Investigator turned into Figueroa Street and headed south. Pete tried to get him to talk again, but he soon realized that it was no use on the busy road. Jupiter couldn’t possibly shout everything back over his shoulder. It was much too loud, and it was too dangerous to ride next to each other.

The sun had already set, and so The Three Investigators switched on the lights on their bikes, even though the road was well lit. Despite Jupiter’s rather unwilling attitude towards any sporting activity, he pedalled amazingly fast. Whatever it was that drove him, it was obviously very important.

He led them out of town, as Bob and Pete soon noticed, towards the northwest, almost in the direction they had come from a few days ago. They rode about half an hour through the city, then they finally reached the outskirts. But instead of going through Beverly Hills, Jupiter kept going further south and they passed Westwood Village. Here the traffic finally calmed down, and as they rode through a sleepy residential area, Pete and Bob finally caught up, moved to Jupiter’s side and confronted him.

“What’s the matter?” Pete asked slowly. “I want to know right now what bit you and why you were riding off like a possessed man.”

“It was just too loud in the city,” Jupiter defended himself. “But now I can tell you the story.”

“We’re asking for it,” Bob remarked dryly.

“So Lys called. She just wanted to talk to me and asked Aunt Mathilda where to reach me. At the moment, she is with Amanda Black to study for her exams after the holidays. You know, Amanda is her old acting teacher and she has this hotel—the Old Star—on the

outskirts of town. So we talked about all sorts of things, and suddenly Lys mentioned casually that another of Amanda's student is staying at the Old Star, and she is quite a well-known person. Three guesses who that is." Jupiter didn't even wait for an answer. "Rita Lolyz. The rich movie diva who was supposed to stay at the Sheraton Grand."

"What?" shouted Bob and Pete at the same time, and Bob almost hit into a parked car.

"But... I thought she's at the Sheraton Grand!" Pete disagreed.

"So says the Raven," Jupiter added. "Yes, that's right. Yeah, right," the First Investigator repeated. "And that's the point. He tricked us. We couldn't have checked where Rita Lolyz was staying at. Now this whole story is finally clear to me. Look, I'll explain it to you from the beginning:

"Three days ago, we surprised the Raven on one of his raids, and you both almost caught him. He just happened to find out where we were, from Bob's business cards. And then he developed a plan. He figured that three smart guys like us would have fun catching him. So he sent us tapes to get us on his trail. However, he took great care to ensure that we would narrowly miss him. I suspect he has an accomplice watching when we solved the riddle and left the hotel. He then informed the Raven by radio or telephone, who would then timed his break-in so that we arrive just too late.

"This whole puzzle game had only one purpose: He wanted us to believe twice that we almost caught him, only to trick us the third time. He gave us a riddle, this time much earlier than usual, to make sure that we would have solved it by the evening. We would then tell the police about it to lead them elsewhere. The Raven would then go to where Rita Lolyz actually is—that is, in Amanda Black's hotel. And, of course, we promptly fell for it."

"Awesome!" moaned Pete. "Just imagine—we'd be sitting in a rooftop café watching the Sheraton Grand Hotel."

"But I don't understand one thing," Bob said as they slowly left Westwood Village. "How did the Raven expect us to solve the mystery? It wasn't exactly easy. He could have played it safe and made it easy."

"But then we might have gotten suspicious," Jupe said, "and that's exactly what he wanted to avoid, of course."

"And how does the Raven know where Rita Lolyz is?" Pete wanted to know.

"This is a question that remains unanswered. But hopefully we'll find out when we catch him tonight."

"But it still doesn't make sense," Bob said. "The Raven didn't have to put on this whole show at all. After all, nobody would have known where Rita Lolyz lives. Why did he unnecessarily endanger himself through this story?"

Jupiter shrugged his shoulders. "Everyone has suspected that Rita Lolyz will be one of the next victims. She's famous for her precious jewels. Maybe the Raven was afraid that she would be monitored by the police, so he set the wrong track. But that's just a guess. Probably, as a precaution, he lured the police elsewhere and keep them busy while he raids some place else. But this is certain—if the Raven gets Rita Lolyz's jewellery, he can sit back for the rest of his life. I don't want to know how much those rocks are worth."

13. Stakeout at the Old Star

Jupiter stopped under a street light, for it had become quite dark now, and took the city map out of his inside pocket. It wasn't so long ago that they had solved a case at Amanda Black's Old Star Hotel, but he wasn't quite sure if he would find it without a map. After he had orientated himself, they continued on their way.

"How do we want to proceed?" Pete asked.

"I told Lys we'd come to her without explaining why. She was very surprised, but I asked her not to say anything to anyone for the time being and to expect us at the door at ten o'clock." He looked at his watch. "We should be able to do this."

About fifteen minutes later, they reached the sign that showed them the way to the Old Star. A gravelled driveway behind high hedges led through a large park to the villa, which had been built in an old English style.

Bob remembered the huge garden very well because he had worked here as a gardener. Some windows were lit, and Lys was waiting for them at the wide two-winged front door.

"Hello, you three!" she called. "Jupe! Tell me what's going on right now!" She walked up to him and gave him a greeting kiss on the cheek.

"Hello, Lys. Let's get inside first," said Jupiter.

Five minutes later, they sat in the office with Amanda Black, and Jupiter told them their story. Lys was able to hold herself back and told Amanda about the late visit. Now the old lady with the high piled hairstyle listened eagerly.

"A jewel thief!" she said when Jupiter had finished. "I can't believe what I'm going through in my little hotel."

"What room is Rita Lolyz in?" Jupiter enquired.

"The largest, of course, Room 303 on the third floor," Amanda willingly provided the information.

"Third floor, right under the roof. Perfect for the Raven," Pete remarked. "Then we'd better get to work right away."

"You're not going up to Rita's, are you?" Amanda asked, startled. "She may be a very nice person—provided you know her—but she is already asleep, and if she is disturbed, she can get very upset. She's a real Hollywood star with all the bitchiness you'd expect," she added with an apologetic smile.

"Don't worry, I don't think it'll be necessary for us to wake her. At least not if everything works out. Pete, I suggest you take a stand in the attic and watch the garden from there. Bob and I will hide outside among the trees. If the Raven shows up, we should wait until he breaks into Miss Lolyz's room before we take action. Otherwise, he might get away. To be on the safe side, we should have our bikes nearby so that we can follow him, if necessary. I think he's coming in a car."

"All right," Bob replied. "Let's go before we're late again."

Lys accompanied Bob outside, while Amanda, Pete and Jupiter went to the third floor. There was a door at the end of the hall leading to the attic. Amanda pulled out a large bunch of keys and unlocked the door, then accompanied them upstairs. She tried to turn on a lamp, but Jupiter held it back.

“No light,” he said. “Maybe the Raven’s already watching the house. It’ll just make him feel insecure.” So they felt their way up in the dark, only sparse moonlight streamed through the narrow skylights.

“Pretty creepy here,” Pete noticed as his eyes got used to the darkness and he recognized vague shadows. It was old furniture, boxes, chests and cartons, which were everywhere and partly covered with white sheets. A spider’s web touched his face, and he quickly wiped it aside. There were six windows there, two each on the long sides, one each on the narrow sides of the attic. They were all not very tall, just high and wide enough for him to climb onto the pitched roof.

Pete could only stand upright in the middle of the room, at the edge he was obstructed by the steeply-sloping roof.

“Well, Pete, you know what to do,” Jupe said. “It’s best to open the windows a bit. If you see or hear something and think that we can’t see or hear it, you can warn us with the familiar call.”

“The Red-bellied Flycatcher!” Pete replied. “All right.” The Three Investigators had already used the call of this rare songbird several times to give themselves unnoticed signals.

Amanda and Jupiter went down the stairs again. Pete looked around the attic again, and a shiver ran through his body. He didn’t like dark attics very much, especially since behind every box and piece of furniture lay a deep shadow in which who knows what could be hidden, and which Pete would rather not examine too closely.

Suddenly the thought occurred to him that the Raven might already be there. Pete then took a closer look at every shadow, but didn’t discover anything. He remembered his task and looked out of the windows checking. As quietly as possible he opened the windows a bit, so that he could push it open completely with a jerk if necessary. From then on, he walked across the entire attic to keep an eye from each side, staying at each window for no more than a few seconds. Restlessly, he played with a piece of rope he had picked up from the floor.

Meanwhile Jupiter had gone out to be with Bob in the garden, after telling Amanda and Lys to keep quiet and turn off the lights, so for the Raven to believe that everyone was asleep.

“Bob, you hide at the back of the house, I’ll take the front. We can’t know where he’ll turn up,” he whispered. “I’ve already arranged with Pete for the Red-bellied Flycatcher signal. So when you see something, you know what to do.”

Jupiter looked down at Bob and frowned. He took off his jacket and handed it to Bob.

“What’s this for?” Bob remarked.

“Put this on. Your T-shirt’s too light, it’ll immediately stand out. I’m wearing a dark T-shirt, so you’d better take my dark blue jacket.” said Jupiter.

“Okay. Well, good luck!” replied Bob.

“Likewise.” They separated, and Bob looked for a hiding place at the back garden among some small trees. From there he had a good view of the back of the hotel. Now it was time to wait.

He waited a long time. Only gradually did the lights in the hotel rooms go out. It was almost half past eleven when the house was finally dark completely. Bob remembered that Detective Gregston and his men were now waiting a few miles away, and suddenly doubts arose. What if Jupiter was wrong with his theory? Maybe the Raven actually thought Rita Lolyz was staying at the Sheraton Grand Hotel, and maybe the police had already caught him. Or he had smelled the coffee and did not show up at all—neither there, nor here. He was getting cold, and he was glad Jupiter had given him his jacket. With regret, he thought of his friend who could be freezing terribly.

But Jupiter had some natural padding to protect him. Slowly he wandered up and down, but in absolute silence. This was unfamiliar after days in the city. Now, every rustling of leaves and cracking of branches under his feet seemed to him like deafening noise.

Although getting a bit restless, Bob was still staring at the house. Suddenly he heard the call of the Red-bellied Flycatcher. Shortly thereafter, he heard it again, now twice in a row. They hadn't agreed to a double call, but Bob remembered that in earlier investigations, a double call meant false alarm. He breathed a sigh of relief and felt his heartbeat accelerate in that brief moment.

He waited, looked at his watch, wrapped his arms around his body and looked at the watch again. It was a little after midnight. That's when he heard the call for the third time. Bob waited, but there was no all-clear. The call had come from Jupiter's direction.

Pete stormed to the window. He heard that call from Jupiter's direction as well. Strained, he stared out into the darkness. He suspected that his friend was behind some trees, and then he saw it! A shadow came slowly from the street towards the house and crept through a small group of trees. In the pale moonlight, Pete saw a figure that looked like a shapeless lump.

When the figure turned around, he saw his profile: a long beak protruded from his face, and he identified the strange shape as wings pressed against his body.

The Raven!

He came up to the last group of trees, stood still for a while and checked his surroundings. Then he raised a crossbow.

Pete heard a soft whirring, followed by a rumble directly above him. The Raven stepped into the shadows of the trees again, and for about two minutes everything remained quiet. Then Pete heard a soft scratching sound above him, followed by a click. Strained, he peered out of the window and recognized a rope that led tautly stretched from the roof down to the garden.

There it was attached to a tree trunk. The Raven hooked himself onto the rope and slowly climbed up with his arms and legs. Bit by bit, he came closer. Pete huddled into a shadow. The Raven finally reached the edge of the roof and felt with his feet for the tiles until he found a secured hold. Then his hands carefully loosened from the rope, and he slowly groped his way in Pete's direction.

Now! Pete thought and pushed the window wide open. The Raven jerked his head up and stared at Pete for a second behind his beak mask.

"Stay where you are," Pete said as calmly as possible. "Or you'll fall off the roof. You can't escape anyway, my friends have surrounded the house."

The Raven squawked loudly, spun around, flapped his wings in Pete's face, and then grabbed hold of the rope.

Pete climbed out of the window and onto the roof. His hands were nervously tensed gripping the rope he had played with in the last hour. He tried not to look down.

"Hold it right there," Pete shouted so loudly that his friends heard him from below. But the Raven only repeated his cawing, hooked himself to the rope and jumped off the roof. Like a phantom, he slid into the depths.

Pete didn't know if Bob and Jupiter were where they were supposed to be, so he made a decision. He wrapped his rope around the Raven's rope like a carabiner, gripped it firmly in both hands, took a deep breath once, closed his eyes and then jumped off the roof as well. He fell, and for a moment, he thought the rope broke. Then he opened his eyes and saw that he was hanging from the Raven's rope and speeding down towards the garden! With a painful jolt, his legs plunged into the ground, and his own momentum pulled him forward. He stumbled and flew into a bush.

“Pete!” he heard someone shout.

“After him!” he yelled. “Get him!”

The Raven was already running through the garden out to the street. Jupiter and Bob chased him, and Pete got back on his feet as quickly as possible. He saw Bob grab the Raven by one wing and wrestled him to the ground, then Jupiter threw himself on the figure. But suddenly the First Investigator was pushed away, the Raven jumped back on his feet, kicked Bob and ran to the driveway. Pete sprinted off, caught up with the Raven just before the road and tugged his arm. He tried to control him, but the Raven croaked and tried to escape. Pete threw himself on the Raven as Jupiter and Bob rushed to his aid.

At that moment an engine roared, and two dazzling bright headlights cut through the darkness. A car raced up, shot up the driveway, splashed gravel to the sides, and headed straight for them. Pete had to let go of the burglar, and the three of them jumped to the side blinded. Shortly the car stopped just short of them and they saw something again. The Raven jumped straight into the passenger seat. The driver accelerated again, headed towards the hotel, turned around in the parking lot with screeching tyres and came back. There was nothing they could do but get themselves to safety and let it pass. The vehicle shot out to the road, accelerated and disappeared!

14. A Question of Pride

“Damn!” Bob shouted as he saw the red tail lights of the car disappear behind a bend. “I didn’t even see the licence plate!”

At that moment, the entrance door of the hotel opened, the outside light was turned on, and Lys ran towards The Three Investigators.

“What happened?” she shouted from afar.

The three of them told her briefly what had happened.

“I didn’t see the licence plate either,” admitted Jupiter. “The license plate light wasn’t on. The Raven really thought of everything. Not even the interior light came on when he opened the door. I couldn’t see who the driver was.”

Bob shook his head in frustration. “All I know is it was a dark sports car.”

“Why couldn’t you hold him?” Pete wanted to know. “You already had him under control.”

“The Raven managed to push his legs under my body, and then he just pushed me away,” Jupiter explained. And he kicked me, arbitrarily, but very deliberately. He seems to have a very good command of some martial art.”

The Second Investigator nodded. “I had that impression, too,” he said. “He got away from me like a slippery fish. Or like a strong bird,” he added thoughtfully after a while. “His cawing was really creepy.”

“And our plan to pursue him with the bikes have failed, too,” Jupiter noted. “The car’s way too fast.”

“What are we going to do now?” Bob asked dejectedly.

“You guys come in first,” Lys decided.

A short time later they sat in the dining room of the hotel, and Amanda made tea for everyone. They couldn’t sleep now anyway.

“It’s getting desperate,” Juve said. “We would have had him by a hair’s breath. No, actually, we already had him. And then his accomplice comes, almost wipes us out, and they both disappear. This is the fourth time the Raven has escaped.”

“We have one consolation. It’s getting nearer every time,” said Pete, grinning in agony. “Maybe we’ll make it next time.”

“Unfortunately, there might not be a next time,” Jupiter replied. “The Raven finally sent us the riddles just to fool us. He didn’t succeed, so there’s no reason for him to give us any more tips.”

“The car suddenly approaching at least confirms our accomplice theory,” Bob remarked.

“Well, it’s just that we won’t have any of that now,” Jupiter sighed resignedly.

“At least you saved Rita Lolyz’s jewellery,” Lys tried to cheer her up. “That’s something too.”

“A small consolation,” Jupiter replied.

Bob shook his head. “Lys is right,” he said. “The Raven didn’t get the jewellery. That puts him under pressure. If he wants to get rich, he has to find another victim. Originally Rita Lolyz was supposed to be the last in his list, but now he may be looking for someone else. After all, tens of thousands of dollars have just slipped through his fingers.”

“What good is that if we don’t know who’s next?” Pete asked, sipping his tea. “This was our last chance. The Raven even said so himself in the last riddle. We’ve failed, there’s nothing we can do about it.” Then he changed the subject: “What do we going to tell Gregston?”

“Holy cow, we forgot all about him,” Jupiter moaned. “He’s still waiting for the Raven outside the Sheraton Grand Hotel. We should call the station and tell them to cancel the mission.”

“There’ll be trouble,” Bob suspected. “And I mean big trouble.”

“I suppose. But we still have to call. It wouldn’t be fair to leave him there all night,” Jupe said. Pete and Bob looked at him expectantly. The First Investigator sighed. “It’s all right, I’ll take care of it.” He got up and went to the next room where there was a telephone.

It took him a long time to get through to Gregston. The detective was on duty, it was said, and Jupiter needed all his powers of persuasion until they believed that he needed to talk to Gregston about this mission.

Finally, he had the detective on his car phone. The First Investigator quickly described the situation to him.

“Have you gone completely insane?” Gregston yelled.

“Sir,” Jupiter tried to calm him down. “We couldn’t do otherwise.”

“How many times do I have to tell you that this is police business and that you have to stay out of it,” Gregston snapped at him.

“What were we supposed to do?” Jupe asked.

“For example, communicate with me,” Gregston replied angrily. “What else?”

“But we couldn’t be sure that our suspicions were correct. If we had alerted you, your mission would have been compromised. The Raven could have showed up at the Sheraton Grand.”

“You should have left that up to me,” Gregston growled.

“It just took me ages to get through to you. We couldn’t afford that tonight, we didn’t have time to lose,” Jupiter continued to defend himself.

“That’s not the point!” The detective had not calmed down in the least. “You’ve unnecessarily put yourself in danger by not informing me! And on top of that you let the Raven get away, which certainly wouldn’t have happened if we handled the situation!”

Jupiter felt the detective’s last words hard and anger arose inside him. “You weren’t very successful last night either, if I may remind you,” he said. “If you had posted some of your people out on the street, you could have caught the Raven yesterday.”

For a second, it was quiet at the other end. Then Gregston yelled, “I don’t want to be told how to do my job by a smart-alec would-be detective in the middle of the night! This conversation is over!” It clicked on the line.

Angrily, the First Investigator went back to the others. “And? How was it?” Pete wanted to know.

“He’s crazy,” Jupiter buzzed. “Instead of being happy we got so close to this case, he gave me hell.”

“And you?” Bob asked. “You probably freaked out.”

“I wouldn’t call it that,” Jupiter replied.

“Come on, Jupiter, we’ve heard you here,” Pete replied. “Don’t you think you’ve gone a little too far this time? After all, he’s actually right.”

Jupiter glared angrily at the Second Investigator. “Whose side are you on, anyway? We were the ones who tracked the Raven down while Gregston...”

“... tried to do his job,” Bob interrupted him. “It’s about something else. You want to prove to Gregston that we can solve this case alone. It’s a question of pride again, nothing more.”

Jupiter nodded. Slowly he calmed down. “You’re quite right, Bob. Now it’s about pride and ambition. We just have to solve the case if we don’t want to look like absolute idiots in front of Gregston. We failed tonight, but it won’t happen to us again!”

“Again?” Pete asked in surprise. “But you just said there won’t be another one.”

“We’ll think of something,” Jupiter mumbled and pinched his lower lip.

They stayed overnight at Amanda’s Old Star, which Lys was especially happy about.

The next morning they met Rita Lolyz. The world-famous film actress, who was otherwise known for her extravagant appearance, wore everyday clothes and did not wear a single piece of jewellery from her valuable collection. So she looked almost boring, Pete thought, although of course, he still blushed when Miss Lolyz shook his hand. She learned the whole story and was delighted that nothing had happened to her and her jewellery. Miss Lolyz promised to show her gratitude to The Three Investigators soon. Nevertheless, she was worried because the Raven was still running free, and she decided to keep her jewellery in the hotel’s safe at all times.

Then they said goodbye to Lys, Amanda and Rita Lolyz and rode leisurely back to Los Angeles.

15. Pete's Exploits

"How are we supposed to find the Raven if he doesn't send us any more riddles," Pete asked when they were sitting in a small sidewalk café to review the case over Coke and ice cream. "Except for the tapes, we never had a clue. But I doubt the Raven will send us any more."

"You're right. After all, the riddles were just a diversion, as we now know. But how would we have proceeded if there were no riddles," Jupe asked.

Bob shrugged. "Not at all, I suppose. We had nothing in our hands. And we still don't have anything, like Pete said. The Raven didn't leave a single trace, except for the tapes, a few feathers and ropes."

"Can't we start with what we have?" Pete suggested. "Somewhere the Raven must get the feathers for the costume. And his equipment: the crossbow and the hooks. If we could figure out where he got them from, maybe we can get on with it."

"And how are you gonna do that?" Bob wanted to know. "This is L.A., you can buy anything from inflatable bunk beds to raven feathers."

"Bob's right," Jupiter agreed with him. "In Rocky Beach we could find out, but not here, in this big city. We have to find a different approach. So, let's try hard. How would we have proceeded?"

"We could have tried to find out how the Raven knew where to break in," Pete said. "He has a source of information, perhaps through his accomplice. Someone needs to know where the rich actresses stay. Who would be familiar with such things? Someone in the hotel business?"

Bob shook his head. "The hotels all have different owners. I don't think anyone at the Beverly Hilton can figure out who lives at Venice Sunset. But tell me—do the actors actually take care of their own room reservation? Or maybe someone else do it for them—a manager or agent or something?"

Jupiter looked up from his sundae. "Not a bad idea, Bob. This would mean that all victims have a common connection, for example the same agency that rented the hotel rooms for them. How could we find that out?"

"With my father's help," Bob replied promptly. "He has the opportunity to find out every detail about a star through the archives at the newspaper." He took a sip of Coke.

Jupiter looked at him. "And?" he asked.

Bob looked back confused. "And what?" he asked.

"And what are you waiting for?" Jupe said. "We have a case to solve! While you're sitting here calmly and drinking Coke, we could get something done by now. Call your father immediately!"

Normally Bob wouldn't have put up with that bossy tone, but he saw the First Investigator's big grin and knew he did not mean it so seriously.

"At your command!" he said and went to the café looking for a phone. After only a few minutes he came back and grinned. "Command executed!"

"And?" Pete asked eagerly.

"You were right, Jupiter. The victims so far are all actually with the same agency. The agency handles such things for the actresses such as interview appointments, public

appearances, advertising campaigns and so on. Among other things, they also takes care of hotel reservations when the star travels. The agency's name is Fame, and they are in Los Angeles, which wasn't exactly quite evident, since the victims were from elsewhere."

"Fantastic," Jupiter cried. "Then we found the Raven's trail again. I hope so, anyway."

"So how do we proceed now?" Pete wanted to know.

"We'll call Fame. Now would be the best time," Jupiter decided and stood up.

"I'm coming with you," Pete and Bob said at the same time, then they looked at each other and laughed. In the café, Jupiter picked out the number of the agency from the telephone book in the small booth.

"Now I'm curious," he said as he dialled. "Fame, Atson here, hello?" came a sympathetic female voice.

"Hello, this is Jason from the Hotel Macbeth," Jupe said in a disguised voice. "We have a guest here who has been referred through your agency: Miss Sandra Rabstribé. There's a problem with the reservation extension."

Jupiter fervently hoped that the woman at the other end would not ask anything, for he had no idea what to tell her. But fortunately she responded as he had expected.

"Hold on, I'll put you through to Mr Krieger." There was a soft beep on the line and after a few seconds a voice said, "Krieger." Jupe said nothing.

"Hello?" the voice asked, then angrily: "Who's there?" Jupiter hung up.

"Are you crazy?" Pete shouted. "Why did you hang up?"

"That was him," Jupiter replied. "That was the Raven, I recognized him. That high, croaking voice—just like on the tapes. Krieger is his name."

"Hopefully he hasn't suspected anything now," Bob said.

But Jupiter shook his head. "I don't think so. I may have simply dialled the wrong number or been put through the wrong line."

"What do we do now?" Pete wanted to know. "Are we calling Gregston?"

The First Investigator looked at him in horror. "Are you crazy? After he was so rude to us yesterday?"

"You weren't very nice either," Bob reminded him.

"I was just defending myself," Jupe said. "We're not gonna call Detective Gregston. If we really want to prove to him that we have what it takes, we'll contact him when the Raven is in the cage."

"All right. So to save our pride, we don't call the police," Pete said ironically. "What do we do instead?"

"We're going there," Jupe said.

"To the police?"

"To Fame."

"When?"

"Now!"

The agency was located in a modern office building in the western part of the city, easily accessible by bicycle. An hour after their phone call, The Three Investigators stood in front of the entrance and chained their bikes to a lamppost. They didn't know how the building was divided inside, and that was a big disadvantage. Possibly Mr Krieger could see them from a window at that moment, so they hurried in.

Fame was quite a large agency and took up two floors of the whole building. They took the elevator to the fifth floor, and when they stepped out, they found themselves in the waiting room. A young woman was sitting behind a desk working on a computer. She looked up as The Three Investigators entered the room.

“Hello,” she said. “What can I do for you?”

Jupiter recognized her by her voice as Atson, with whom he spoke with on the phone.

“How do you do? My name is Jupiter Jones. My friends and I had to write an essay for school about working in an agency, and we wanted to ask if we could take a look around.”

Miss Atson smiled at them, but firmly said: “Well, I can’t let you walk around that easily, but you’re welcome to ask me a few questions.”

She looked a little irritated in Pete’s direction. That was no wonder, because Pete wore sunglasses, although there was no dazzling brightness in the room.

Jupiter began with a harmless interview. After a while Pete stepped nervously from one leg to the other and then asked quietly: “Could I use the restroom?”

Miss Atson smiled again. “Of course. But the restroom is a floor above us, down the hall and then to the right.”

Pete nodded slightly and went back to the elevator. But instead of going upstairs to the restroom, he sneaked through the corridor and inspected the small boards next to the office doors.

He was looking for the name ‘Krieger’. There was no one at the corridor, and occasionally Pete heard voices. He stepped around a corner, and there, a few yards away, there was a photocopier in the hallway. There was a man standing in front of it. He looked up. The Second Investigator winced. Was this Mr Krieger? He knew the Raven only with a mask, but the Raven would recognize him. Although Pete anxiously waited for a reaction, he lowered his head a little and just kept walking. But the man at the copier immediately looked back at the rattling machine. Pete breathed a sigh of relief.

Pete proceeded to search further and finally found Krieger’s room. He listened at the door. A muted voice could be heard, it sounded as if Krieger was on the phone. Pete couldn’t remain there too long, or Miss Atson would get suspicious.

But just as he was wondering what to do, the conversation behind the door ended. A chair creaked, footsteps came closer. Pete ran back and hid around the corner of the hallway. Fortunately, the man on the copier had gone off. The Second Investigator heard Krieger’s door open and close, then a second door opened and it became quiet. Carefully, he looked around the corner. Krieger had gone to the restroom which was directly opposite his room.

Now or never! Pete thought and ran as fast and as quietly as possible to Krieger’s door. He listened again, but when nothing moved, he carefully pushed down the handle and slipped into the room. It was a small office, with a big desk and some filing cabinets. Shelves filled with files piled up on the walls. Pete went to the desk. There was a chaos of papers, office equipment and a computer with a monitor and a printer.

What would he be looking for? Undecidedly, Pete raised some papers, pushed a box of disks aside. Rather by chance, his eyes fell on a disk that was lying next to the drive. It was marked with a pen instead of a printed label, and was the only disk not in the box—possibly it was used recently.

In a flash, the Second Investigator evaluated his possibilities. He could load the disk and look at the contents, or he could take it with him, or... Then he quickly pushed the disk into the drive, reached for the mouse to try to check the contents of the disk.

Just then, Pete heard a door opening outside in the hallway. His pulse started to race. He immediately removed the disk and put it back in its original position. Then he jumped over to one of the file cabinets and ducked behind its side wall.

A moment later, the door opened. The corner where Pete was hiding could not be seen from either the door or the desk. But what if Krieger did not go back to his desk, but to the

window or to the filing cabinet... The desk chair creaked. If Krieger was now working on the computer again, he could notice that someone had tampered with his computer.

Pete felt a warm drop of sweat down his back. He heard Krieger rustling over some papers, listened to all movements, considered whether he should risk looking around the corner. But then, he decided to remain in his hiding place.

Suddenly he heard rattling of computer keys.

16. The Raven's Next Strike

Just as Jupiter was wondering if Pete had been successful, Miss Atson's phone rang. She didn't pick up the phone, but just pressed a button so that the voice was transmitted through the loudspeaker. It was probably a conversation within the office. "Atson here, hello?"

"Hi, Nancy, it's Elliot. Could you bring me a cup of coffee upstairs," a voice came out of the loudspeaker.

Jupiter nudged Bob inconspicuously with his foot. But that would not have been necessary, as Bob also recognized the voice—it was that of the Raven.

"I have a visitor right now, Elliot," Miss Atson replied. "Get your own coffee."

"All right," the voice growled. Then the secretary pressed the button again and turned again to Jupiter and Bob.

"Uh..." Bob began and looked at the watch. "I think we have to go now."

"Already?" asked Miss Atson. "But you wanted to know how..."

"Yes," Jupiter interrupted her. "But we were wrong about time, we have another appointment. We can come back in the next few days, or we'll call you if you don't mind."

He quickly stepped back and pressed the elevator button.

"But your friend hasn't come back yet," said Miss Atson.

"He probably got lost," Bob said apologetically.

"We'll just see him upstairs." He looked uncertainly at the elevator, hoping that Elliot Krieger would not immediately appear in the elevator when it opened. But when the steel walls slid sideways, the cabin was empty. They went in quickly.

"Thank you very much," Juve said again and pressed the button for the ground floor. The door closed in front of the baffled Miss Atson, then the cabin moved down.

"Phew," Jupiter was relieved. "That was a close one. If Krieger had seen us..."

"But where's Pete?" Bob asked. "I hope everything went well with him. I can't help feeling that he's in trouble. Shouldn't we go upstairs?"

"To run into Krieger?" Juve asked. "No, we'll wait downstairs. If Pete isn't here in five minutes, we'll look for him."

The elevator reached the ground floor and Jupiter and Bob got out. They walked restlessly up and down at the entrance area. Two minutes later they saw that the elevator was called up and came down again a little later.

"If that's Krieger, we'd better get out of sight real quick," said the First Investigator.

The door opened and Pete came out. "I'm glad to see you here," he shouted. "I thought Krieger had caught you."

"That's what we thought of you, too," Bob replied. "What happened?"

Pete quickly told them about his exploits. "When I thought I heard the clicks from the keyboard, I suspected that the Raven could have noticed that someone was tampering with his computer. But fortunately, it was just the phone keys clicking when he called Nancy for coffee."

Jupiter laughed. "We heard that. Nancy is Miss Atson, and when we heard that Krieger might be coming down, we quickly disappeared."

“Anyway, when Krieger went out for his coffee, I went back to the computer, grabbed the disk and transferred the contents into a blank disk I found in the box. I then made everything as it was and disappeared.” Triumphant he pulled the disk out of his pocket and waved it around in the air.

“Well done, Pete,” praised Jupiter. “Hopefully Krieger won’t notice he’s missing a disk.”

The Second Investigator waved. “Not likely. He had a whole bunch of empty disks in his box, it doesn’t stand out if he’s missing one. I just hope we find something with this copy. Unfortunately, our computer is in Rocky Beach. What do we do now? Should we go back?”

Bob shook his head. “I have a better idea.”

Half an hour later, they were sitting in Mr Andrews’s office, and Bob was working on his father’s computer. “And I thought you’d bring me more rolls of film. How long will you use my desk?” he wanted to know.

“Depends,” Bob murmured, absorbed in his work. He accessed the directory while Jupiter and Pete looked curiously over his shoulder. A series of file names appeared.

“Aha,” Bob said. “This looks very promising. Look what we have here. A file with the name ‘Appointments’, and one named ‘Names and Dates’, and one called ‘Riddles’. Let’s try ‘Riddles’ first.” He clicked on the file and texts appeared on the screen.

“Well, if that doesn’t look familiar,” Pete shouted.

““The Raven flies gracefully at night,” Bob read aloud. “This is the text from the first tape riddle!”

They skimmed over the rest of the file, and found that all the texts they had heard on the tapes were stored in that file.

“This is the proof,” Jupiter concluded. “Elliot Krieger is indeed the Raven. Go see the other files, will you, Bob?”

Next came the file ‘Names and Dates’, and here appeared names of various actors along with the hotel names, dates, and room numbers. After a while, they found their way around the disorderly list. The names of past victims of the Raven were also there, but they were not marked in any way.

The file ‘Appointments’ brought a detailed list of the Raven’s raids. The Three Investigators had expected Rita Lolyz to be the last on the list, but another name followed: Gina Bermkis, who only recently celebrated a great movie success. Her name was listed along with her hotel name and room number, and when the raid was planned to take place.

“That’s today!” Bob shouted in surprise. “Then I was right: The Raven wants to strike again, because he didn’t get jewellery from Rita Lolyz.”

“And this information is presented to us here on a silver platter,” Jupe said with satisfaction. “It couldn’t be better. This disk is not only the best proof we now have, but also a last chance for us to catch the Raven and secure Elliot Krieger’s ticket to prison. And this time we’re not gonna let him get away. Bob, it’s best to print out everything from the disk. And then we have a lot to do.”

“Namely?” Pete asked expectantly.

The First Investigator gave it some thought. “We need a rope. And then we go to a hardware store.”

17. The Final Trap

“But we must go up to the eighth floor,” Jupiter tried to convince the doorman at the lobby.

“If you don’t live here or are expected by one of our guests, unfortunately I don’t see any possibility to let you in,” said the doorman. “Who are you going to see?”

Jupiter looked at his two friends. If they told the doorman of the Beverly Hilton Hotel that they wanted to see Gina Bermkis, they probably had no chance to get in at all. But how could he convince him?

“We can’t tell you that,” he replied. “Just a minute.” He pulled his two friends a few yards away.

The doorman watched them from his post at the entrance.

“What if we call Gregston after all?” Pete whispered to the others. “He could convince the man. It worked the last time.”

“No,” Jupiter decided. “This time we can do it alone.”

“You and your detective’s pride,” moaned the Second Investigator.

“What’s wrong with that?” Jupiter retorted.

“But what are we supposed to do now?” Bob asked.

Jupiter pinched his lower lip. Then he suddenly said, “Wait here! I just need to try something.” He moved away from the hotel, and Pete and Bob could only look at him in amazement.

“What’s he up to now?” Pete wanted to know.

“Does he want to climb up the façade?”

Bob and Pete wandered slowly up and down in front of the entrance. It was still bright outside. The doorman still looked at them suspiciously. When Jupiter finally reappeared, he had a grin all over his face. Bob and Pete looked at him expectantly, but Jupiter ignored them and headed straight to the doorman. “Would you let us in, please?” he asked again, now very confident.

“Not until you can tell me who you want to see.”

“We want to see Miss Gina Bermkis,” Juve said for sure.

The doorman raised an eyebrow, and laughed. “But I can only let you in if Miss Bermkis wants to see you. And she certainly won’t.”

“I think she would,” Jupiter replied coolly. “If you would please ask her.”

“This might suit you. I won’t bother Miss Bermkis just because three boys asked me to.”

“I’m sure you won’t disturb her,” Jupiter assured me. “Miss Bermkis is expecting us.”

Now the doorman started to get angry. “And why didn’t you say that until now?”

“Just ask her if she wants to see Pete, Bob and Jupiter,” demanded the First Investigator.

The doorman gave him a scowl, took out a walkie-talkie hanging from his belt and spoke into it. A little later, a squeaky voice came out of the device. The Three Investigators could not hear what was spoken, but the astonished expression on the doorman’s face spoke volumes. He mumbled something into the walkie-talkie and hung it back on his belt.

He said, “Miss Bermkis is actually expecting you. I’m sorry that I...”

“It’s all right,” Jupiter interrupted him and shoved himself past him through the front door. As he walked through the magnificent foyer to the elevator, Pete and Bob pressed him

with questions. "How'd you do that? Where did you go?"

"I was at a phone booth and called Amanda's Old Star. I remembered that Rita Lolyz and Gina Bermkis once made a movie together, 'The Face in the Mirror', remember? So I asked Miss Lolyz how well they knew each other, and she said they were good friends. I then asked her to call Gina Bermkis here at the Beverly Hilton and briefly explain the situation to her. Well, and now Miss Bermkis welcomes us."

The elevator came and The Three Investigators went in. They knew from the information on the disk where the suite of Gina Bermkis was, and so a few moments later they stood at her door and knocked. A pretty young woman opened the door for them, and again it took The Three Investigators a moment to grasp who they had in front of them.

"Hello, I'm Gina Bermkis. You must be the three detectives. Rita just called me." She reached out her hand to everyone, and The Three Investigators introduced themselves.

Pete was a bit nervous, but he had seen so many stars in the last days that even Gina Bermkis couldn't unsettle him any more. He also noticed that she looked very natural without make-up and out of the spotlight. She invited the three of them in and let them tell her the situation in detail. She couldn't believe she was the next victim.

"I'm a little scared," she confessed to The Three Investigators. "Shouldn't we call the police?"

"Maybe the Raven will soon be here and if the police shows up, he might get suspicious," Jupiter pointed out.

"Well, on the other hand it's quite exciting," Miss Bermkis replied and laughed: "Like in a film by Alfred Hitchcock. I am the victim who must scream in the end, and you are my brave knights." She smiled at the three of them, and all noticed how they blushed slightly. "How are you going to proceed?"

"We will wait for the Raven," Jupiter explained. "He'll probably come through the window again, opposite is a building that's just right for him. We'll open the window and plant the jewellery box out as bait so that the Raven will not suspect anything. As soon as he's in the room, we'll snap our trap shut."

"Literally," said Pete, giggling as he thought about the plan Jupiter had suggested to them in the afternoon.

"And what is my job?" Miss Bermkis wanted to know. "Cross your fingers for us!"

The Three Investigators spent the rest of the day in the hotel, fearing that they would be watched by the Raven or his accomplice if they left. So they talked to Miss Bermkis.

In the evening she disappeared into another room provided by the management and The Three Investigators prepared the trap. They took up positions in the suite, and it was time to wait. They had planned everything exactly, but yet they had doubts, when the minutes passed endlessly and slowly. Although Jupiter had demanded absolute silence at the beginning, after some time they whispered in the darkness of the room about the plan again and again.

It was almost twelve midnight when something finally moved. They heard a soft sound above them that reminded Pete of the rumbling on Amanda's roof. For some time nothing happened, then Jupiter saw from his hiding place a dark shadow at the window. The silhouette with a long beak mask was clearly visible in front of the lights of the city.

Almost without a sound, the Raven cleverly climbed through the window into the suite and turned to the bed. Jupiter saw Raven staring at the sleeping person for a while and then looked at the jewellery box on the bedside table. The wings rustling quietly as he stretched out an arm. Carefully he pulled at the top drawer of the box. A necklace studded with precious stones flashed in the moonlight. The Raven grabbed it, and there was a loud clack.

He croaked deafeningly loud. At that moment, Jupiter turned on the light, one hand sprang out from under the blanket and grabbed the Raven's arm, and two more hands held his feet.

"I got him!" Bob shouted from under the bed. He quickly put the prepared rope sling around the Raven's legs and pulled it tight. The other end of the long rope was already attached to one leg of the bed.

"Me too!" Pete flipped the blanket aside without loosening the iron grip on the Raven.

Now Jupiter rushed out behind the door and threw himself at the burglar, who was still screaming loudly and waved his free hand in the air. A mousetrap clamped his fingers!

"That's it, Mr Krieger!" Jupiter shouted. With combined strength, the three threw him onto the bed, and Pete and Bob held him by his arms and legs.

"Get this thing off me!" cawed a voice distorted with pain.

"This?" Pete asked hypocritically, removing the mousetrap he bought from the hardware store in the afternoon from his fingers. "That was a very good idea, Juve," he praised the First Investigator. "I think you can call Detective Gregston now."

"With pleasure," said the First Investigator. "But first, let us free the poor Raven from his mask." He turned the black-clad body a little to the side, then grabbed the beak and took off the mask.

"But that's..." Pete began, staring with his eyes wide open into a woman's face framed by raven black hair.

"... Not Krieger!" Bob finished the sentence.

"Of course I'm not Krieger," hissed the prisoner, and now that she had been freed from the mousetrap, she tried to break free. But Pete held her down while Jupiter tied her hands.

"You damned boys!"

"But I know you," Pete shouted. "You..."

"... You're the receptionist from our hotel!" Jupiter interrupted.

"And you're the Raven?" Pete said. "Or?"

The woman flashed at him angrily with dark eyes. "Looks like it." As if to prove it, she croaked, but now the sound was quite different from in the previous nights. "We've had the pleasure to meet a few times before."

"But how..." Bob began, but then broke off, and everyone stared in amazement at the young woman they had not expected under the mask.

"Krieger is your accomplice!" Jupiter exclaimed suddenly. "He was never the Raven, he just gave you the necessary information and made the tapes with the riddles. And the tapes were never placed at the hotel door, instead they were in your possession right from the start!"

"Smart fellow," noticed the woman, who had since stopped squirming. "But Krieger will disappear with the loot if I don't come back. So you've only caught half the Raven."

Jupiter jumped to the phone. "I'm calling Gregston. He must intercept Krieger at home before he can escape."

"But we don't even know where he lives," Bob threw in.

The First Investigator waved the phone book.

18. The Raven is in the Cage

The next morning, they sat in Detective Gregston's office and talked about the case. Both the Raven and Krieger were now in police custody. What happened was, after Jupiter's call, the police had immediately driven to and surrounded Krieger's house.

Gregston reported: "We arrived just in time to stop Krieger escaping. When questioned, he admitted his role in the raids and confirmed that he was the Raven's accomplice who drove the getaway car. In this last raid, when he sensed that the Raven did not come back on time, he returned straight to his home, intending to pack and escape."

"Yes, we knew of that because the Raven told us." Bob interrupted.

"In fact, he was packing his bags when we intervened." Gregston said. "Also, I have some news for you. The Raven has already made a first statement. Her name is Lisa Manninger and she comes from a circus family. Therefore she is physically in very good condition, and this allowed her to escape a few times. She worked in a movie studio where special effects, models and other things are produced before she got a job in your hotel."

"Incredible coincidence!" Pete remarked. "Of all the many hotels in Los Angeles, she worked at the one we stayed in!"

Gregston continued: "She built the very effective rope crossbow herself, as well as the Raven costume. By the way, the cawing came from blowing into a whistle built into the beak. Sometime ago in the movie business she made acquaintance with Elliot Krieger, and both together worked out the raids, where Krieger was probably the planner and Lisa Manninger the executor. Their motive was mainly for wealth, and Gina Bermkis was planned to be the last victim. They would have shared the loot and disappeared."

"We were lucky," said Pete.

"Lucky? You three are very clever," Gregston remarked and looked at him darkly. "Even that, you know that I still don't approve of you venturing on your own... although I am very pleased with the result." Gregston's gloomy face then changed into a smile. He turned to the First Investigator and reached out his hand. "Shall we bury the hatchet, Jupiter Jones?"

"With pleasure, Detective," he replied and shook the detective's hand.

"One thing I don't understand yet," Bob said. "What was that raven disguise for? That seems pointless."

"Not for Lisa Manninger. Her motive was not only for wealth, but also for fame. She never achieved this as an artist or performer under her true identity, so she created the Raven to do these stunts for the publicity. She probably has achieved that now, even though it won't do her any good while in prison."

"By the way, we have a souvenir for you," Pete said when Gregston finished his report. He took a newspaper out of the inside pocket of his jacket. "This is the special supplement to today's edition of the *Los Angeles Times*. It's called 'The Trail of the Raven', and there are many photos of us in it." He solemnly presented the paper to the detective. At one corner of the paper was attached the business card of The Three Investigators. "That's for in case you ever need our help," Pete added with a grin when Gregston spotted the card.

Gregston laughed. "I have a surprise for you too," he said. "Just before you came, Rita Lolyz called. She wanted to show her gratitude for saving her jewellery. However, since you

don't want to accept money, she came up with something else. Together with her friend, Gina Bermkis, she has arranged for you three to attend the Golden Raven ceremony tomorrow evening."

"Wow!" called Pete. "Really?"

Bob and Jupiter were also thrilled, but then they saw that their friend's face darkened.

"What's the matter?" Bob wanted to know.

"I don't even know what to wear," Pete replied.

Bob, Jupiter and Detective Gregston laughed. "Now you sound like Kelly," Jupe said.

"Well, listen, we can't possibly show up in jeans and a T-shirt!" Pete said.

"Exactly," Bob agreed with him. "What would Jodie Foster think of us?"

"That's right. Therefore, I suggest that we sacrifice the rest of our common fund and pick out an appropriate evening attire. Suits and ties for The Three Investigators. That would be the perfect conclusion to this case."

"Agreed," Bob said and then remarked: "The drama's over, let's turn the page; for the Raven is finally in the cage!"